Dissent

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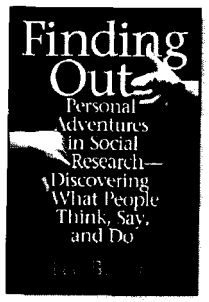

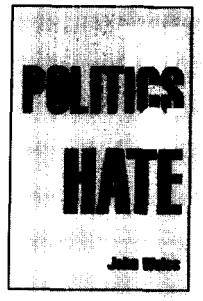

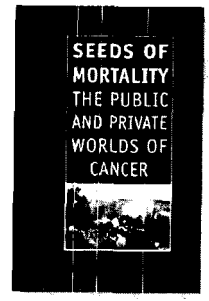

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Editor's Page

IT IS HARD to know what to say. At this moment, it looks as if our country is headed into a "war of choice" that we should not have chosen. When you read this issue of *Dissent*, we will be at war, or there will have been a war, or not. The moment for opposition to the war itself will probably be over. Once the fighting begins, I shall hope for the early fall of the Ba'athist regime. "Regime change" is not a good reason for war, but it had better be a consequence of it. A deal with second-tier Ba'athists, at the expense of Iraqi dissidents, would be a political and moral disaster. ■ Assuming that there is a war, the first issue for the left must be the conduct of the battles. The way the war is fought will be the most immediate indication of the Bush administration's plans for its aftermath. If our strategy and tactics are designed to minimize civilian casualties, even if this entails greater risks for American and British soldiers, we will send a hopeful signal to ordinary Iraqis. If we kill large numbers of civilians, we won't look like much of an alternative to Saddam Hussein. ■ The second issue for the left is the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq. Afghanistan is a sorry precedent, and nothing in the administration's work-up to the war inspires confidence in its commitment to the vision of its own ideologues: a liberal, democratic, federalist Iraqi state. Maybe that is a millennial vision; certainly those of us who oppose the war find it hard to imagine realizing it in this world. But now the administration, working with Iraqi opponents of Saddam, must bring it as close to realization as possible. One crucial test will be a settlement that doesn't represent another American betrayal of the Kurdish people. ■ The third issue for the left is the foreign policy that produced this war (and that also produced, as an unintended consequence, worldwide opposition to it). I have heard it called an imperial foreign policy, but I don't think that we will succeed in understanding or opposing it unless we break with the old categories of Marxist theory. Within a real empire, unilateralism makes a lot of sense: who else is there to invite into the decision-making process? But that is not our situation; unilateralism for us is at once arrogant and foolish. On a host of issues—political, economic, environmental—we need allies, and we need them even if (or precisely because) we will have to negotiate and compromise for the sake of the alliances. Going it alone is not a policy; it is a fantasy, and it is the kind of fantasy that politicians have before a great fall.

M.W.

A NOTE TO OUR READERS
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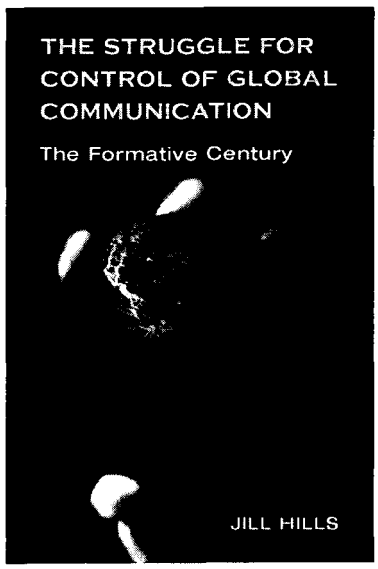

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Jill Hills

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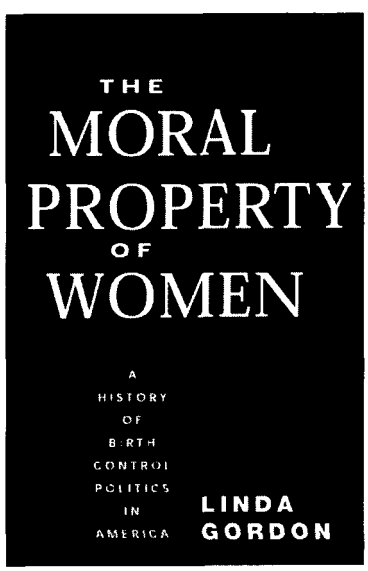

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Bush's Budget Lunacy

Mark Levinson

In *The Right Man*, a memoir of his experience as a speechwriter in the Bush White House, David Frum claims that after September 11, "There was no more domestic agenda. The domestic agenda was the same as the foreign agenda. Win the war—then we'll see." Although the image of a president transformed by that terrible day is one Bush would like to cultivate, there is little evidence that it is true. Domestic policy has not been eclipsed by foreign policy. Rather, the administration's domestic policy is being pursued with the same recklessness that characterizes its foreign policy.

Everything about the Bush administration's tax and budget policy is wrong. The tax breaks are excessive. They go to the wrong people. They will not stimulate the economy. Their effect on domestic social spending will be horrendous. Their long-term effect on the economy will be damaging. The arguments made on their behalf are laughable.

The budget that George W. Bush sent to Congress had a record $307 billion deficit for 2004, on top of a $304 billion deficit this fiscal year. Asked about the ballooning budget deficits, Glenn Hubbard, the departed chair of the president's Council of Economic Advisers, said deficits are neither good nor bad. "What matters is what you're doing with the money."

Hubbard is right. It's not the size of the deficit but what the deficit is used for. And that is precisely the problem (well, one of the problems) with the president's budget: The Bush administration is doing the wrong thing with the money. It is cutting taxes on wealthy people when it should be increasing public and private spending and stimulating demand by giving relief to consumers and aiding state budgets.

The combined cost of the administration's new tax-cut package, the proposal to make the 2001 tax cut permanent, is at least $2.7 trillion through 2013.* The two major pieces of the package are the elimination of individual taxes on corporate dividends and the acceleration of certain pieces of the 2001 tax cut—such as the cuts in income tax rates for upper income filers and the expansion of the child tax credit—so they take full effect in 2003. Supposedly a response to the slow economy, the package is very poorly designed as an economic stimulus. For example, more than 90 percent of the dividend tax cut would not take effect until after 2003; that is, after the economy is expected to have recovered from the current downturn.

Never has a tax plan been so skewed toward the rich. The 226,000 Americans with an income of over a million dollars would get an average tax cut of almost $90,000 from the Bush growth package alone—while someone in the middle of the population (with an income of $37,000) would get a tax cut of only $256. Some 31 percent of the nation's taxpayers would get no benefit from the Bush tax cuts and almost half (48 percent) would receive less than $100 in tax cuts. Another way to look at it is that the 226,000 richest tax filers, those with incomes over a million dollars, will receive a benefit roughly equal in size to the 120 million tax filers with incomes below a hundred and twenty thousand dollars. Under the Bush proposal to cut dividend taxes, Bill Gates would receive thirty-eight million dollars per year in dividends tax free. John Snow, Bush's secretary of the treasury, would save some $600,000, and Dick Cheney would save $326,000.

According to President Bush, these tax cuts

*The sources for this article are the useful reports from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Citizens for Tax Justice, and the Economic Policy Institute.

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are necessary because corporate profits are unfairly double-taxed. That is, they are taxed first when companies earn them and second when they're distributed to shareholders as dividends. But last year less than half of actual total corporate profits were subject to corporate income tax. Take for example CSX, the company run by Treasury Secretary John Snow. CSX paid no federal income taxes on its $934 million in U.S. profits over the past four years. Instead, it got rebate checks from the Treasury totaling $164 million. As for personal taxes on dividends, only a small portion of profits are paid out as dividends, and most of those dividends are tax exempt too, because they're paid to pension funds and tax exempt retirement accounts. U.S. federal and state corporate income taxes amount to only 1.5 percent of our GDP, less than in every other industrial democracy except Iceland.

BUSH CLAIMS that the tax cut will stimulate the economy. The historical evidence is weak. The 1980s were a period of large reductions in marginal tax rates. The 1990s were a period of marginal tax rate increases; marginal rates on higher income taxpayers were raised in both 1990 and 1993. Believers in supply-side tax cuts argued that the 1980s tax cuts would ignite greater economic growth while the 1990 and 1993 changes would do significant damage to the economy. The average annual rate of economic growth was as high during the 1990s business cycle as during the business cycle of the 1980s.

The ghost of David Stockman hovers over this budget. Bush's plan is to slash taxes, generate big deficits, and express regrets that, as compassionate as his conservatism is, he is compelled to cut social programs. The gargantuan tax cuts will mean that government programs get hammered. According to a Brookings Institution study, the Bush budgetary priorities will require roughly a 40 percent real cut in discretionary spending over the next decade. And this doesn't even take into account the cost of the proposed Iraq War, which is not included in the budget.

The news gets worse. States are struggling with deficits likely to total at least $70 billion this year and $85 billion next year. These represent the largest state budget gaps in more than fifty years. The states' dire fiscal crisis is largely the product of the national economic downturn, but Bush's plan will cause states to lose more than four billion dollars a year, making state budget deficits larger. With federal aid unlikely, states are laying off workers and making deep cuts in health care, education, and public safety funding. They are also raising taxes—a step they are forced to take in part because of tax cuts and other cutbacks at the federal level.

As states raise taxes, our tax system gets more regressive. The average state and local tax rate on the most well-off 1 percent of families is 5.2 percent. The average rate on families in the middle 20 percent of the income spectrum is 9.6 percent—almost twice the effective rate that the richest people pay. The average rate on the poorest 20 percent of families is the highest of all. At 11.4 percent it is more than double the effective rate on the very wealthy.

So what will be the effect of Bush's tax and budget program? The government will deliver million of dollars to the wealthiest people in our society, slash spending on programs that aid the middle class and the poor, and create an even more unequal tax system as states impose regressive taxes to replace revenue lost from federal aid to states. Long-term structural deficits will plague our economy for decades.

Not bad for a president with no domestic agenda. ●

MARK LEVINSON is chief economist at the Union of Needletrades Industrial and Textile Employees.

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Democratic Misalliances

The New McGovernites

Benjamin Ross

IN ONE OF THOSE ironies to which history is no stranger, the George McGovern coalition has resurfaced in the electoral calculations of twenty-first-century conservative Democrats. In today's Democratic Party, it is the right wing whose strategy pairs racial minorities with the affluent, educated middle class. This partnership's previous appearance on political center stage, John Judis and Ruy Teixeira remind us in *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, was as the left-wing loser of the landslide presidential election of 1972.

A brief backward look sheds light on current alignments. The McGovern campaign grew out of years of antiwar and civil rights activism. Its origins lay in a political current called the New Politics, which shared some key premises with the better remembered New Left while diverging sharply from the New Left's antidemocratic conclusions. Both presupposed that the working class had become conservative and was no longer the core of the movement for social change. Where the New Left called on the remaining progressives—students, oppressed races, and cultural minorities—to make a revolution, the New Politics was committed to electoral action and understood that these groups were too small by themselves to form a majority.

The New Politics thus made a broader appeal, modeled on civil rights victories of a few years earlier. It turned to a "constituency of conscience" committed to procedural reform, peace, racial justice, and social tolerance. Working-class voters lost to racial backlash—a shift accelerated by the movement's moralistic focus on white racism—would be replaced by the growing affluent and educated middle class. College towns, upscale suburbs, and newly gentrifying urban neighborhoods were indeed becoming Democratic as blue-collar areas moved rightward.

There was more hope than vote-counting behind this strategy, and Kevin Phillips, Richard Scammon, and Ben Wattenberg produced devastating critiques based on polling and election returns. But such writings did little to dim its appeal; the theme of well-educated reformers against the organized "interests" had deep roots in American political culture. Some Vietnam War opponents uncannily resembled the 1880s feminists of Henry James's *The Bostonians*, and the McGovern reformers' unrelenting focus on procedural details of the presidential nominating process recalled the mugwumps' fixation on civil service reform in the same decade. The will to believe was strong, and only the disaster of 1972 would discredit the New Politics strategy.

The years that followed saw shifting alliances among Democrats. The election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 pulled middle-class reformers toward the center, while what remained of the party's intellectual left resumed its alliance with labor. With many of the neoconservatives who had opposed McGovern becoming Republicans, an intellectual vacuum opened up on the right side of the party.

Into this void in the mid-1980s stepped a group called the Democratic Leadership Council. Initially organized by elected officials, mostly from the South, and financed by business lobbyists, the DLC at first seemed to recapitulate the themes of McGovern's critics. It urged support for a strong national defense and mainstream cultural values while avoiding divisive racial issues.

But there was a crucial difference. The DLC, like the more extreme of the New Politics theorists, saw labor as the real enemy. DLC founder Al From had even supported McGovern's former campaign manager, Gary

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Hart, against labor-backed Walter Mondale in 1984. Where New Politics critics Scammon and Wattenberg had urged "progressivism on economic issues and toughness on the Social Issue," New Democrats abhorred big government and tax-and-spend liberalism.

The New Democrats had studied the lessons of Democratic defeats and could convincingly guide candidates away from mistakes that had led to past losses. But how were elections to be won? At first, the DLC was much clearer about what to avoid than what to do. By embracing Bill Clinton, whose political genius included an uncanny ability to reconcile populism and centrism, they delayed hard choices and gained time to think. As the nineties passed, a distinctive electoral strategy crystallized.

In the mature New Democratic theory, the crucial swing voters are suburban soccer moms and their spouses, the office park dads. Forget working-class Reagan Democrats, who represent the old politics and are declining in numbers anyway. Seek votes in affluent, educated, and tolerant suburbs—where voters conveniently want the government to create "private-sector economic opportunity" that will enrich the New Democrats' business backers—while reaping the benefits of demographic growth among blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. As pollster Mark Penn puts it, Democrats "must develop a message and policy agenda that consolidates earlier gains among suburban women and minority voters while capturing a much larger percentage of suburban men."

What were this message and agenda to be? The DLC did not lack for policies; beginning in the late eighties it had developed carefully thought-out plans that addressed real problems while avoiding offense to corporate interests. Focusing on the use of market mechanisms in the delivery of government services, it endorsed charter schools, managed-competition in health care, and a raft of smaller reforms. A communitarian strand of thought led to support for national service for young people. The ideas were worthy, but they were thin gruel. As attractive as some of the individual proposals might be, they were no more attractive to the New Democrats' target voters than to anyone else, and they were hardly the inspiration of a movement.

To draw votes from their upscale suburban constituency, New Democrats found themselves falling back on a more centrist version of the social issues of 1972. Reproductive choice was now a majority position, and they embraced the abortion issue. DLC theorists also favor gay rights, although candidates are often less enthusiastic. Reversing the Scammon and Wattenberg recipe, New Democrats proudly dub themselves fiscal conservatives and social progressives.

This is an ancient formula in American politics (which perhaps explains why its users are so overinsistent on their own newness). Election returns show that political alignments around social issues have shifted much less than DLC rhetoric would suggest. Democratic margins grow in older, inner suburbs where McGovern did relatively well. Expanding outer suburbs—where one finds the young married computer programmers whom New Democratic pollsters love to talk about—vote Republican.

An issue that exemplifies the strengths and weaknesses of the New Democratic approach is gun control. Passionately embraced by soccer moms, it has real political appeal to a target constituency. It is also backed by blacks, whose allegiance the New Democrats need to retain. It offers an answer to violent crime, an issue that brought past generations of left-wing Democrats to grief. Opposition comes from declining rural areas, whose votes New Democratic theorists propose to write off anyway. And, never to be forgotten, it affects only a narrow segment of big business and requires very little in the way of government expenditures.

But the politics of gun control contains hidden pitfalls. It can be argued plausibly that what offends control advocates is the gun owners as much as the guns. The movement is centered, after all, in affluent suburbs where armed criminals are rare. In the wealthy New York, Philadelphia, and Washington suburbs where voters are most exercised by the issue, insider trading is a more common felony than assault with a deadly weapon, and shutting

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down stockbrokers instead of gun dealers would yield a sharper reduction in the crime rate. What the fervor for gun control does is reinforce social distinctions between these neighborhoods and the more plebeian precincts where guns are common. It's not hard to see why a deer hunter might think it has more to do with snobbery than public safety.

These overtones matter because the numbers still don't add up for the new coalition. The recent Maryland gubernatorial election is a textbook example. Democratic candidate Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, running in a state about as demographically congenial as one could hope, followed the DLC recipe to a T. Her campaign focused heavily on gun control while avoiding any hint of populism. Unable in a state election to run as a foreign policy hawk, she did the next best thing by choosing a Republican admiral as her running mate. The result? Townsend maintained heavy Democratic margins in highly educated inner Washington suburbs, inspired strong support from growing Hispanic and Asian communities, and got a good if not outstanding turnout from black precincts. Her opponent ran well among Baltimore's white working class, ran away with rural areas and outer suburbs, and became Maryland's first Republican governor since Spiro Agnew.

The Maryland election reveals another trap awaiting the New Democrats. Their strategy largely takes minorities for granted, relying on Republican racism and xenophobia to maintain high levels of Democratic support. But Republicans have read the demographic tea leaves, and they make no secret of their intention to cut into Democratic margins, especially among Asians and Hispanics. New Democrats are hard put to respond. Their economic conservatism precludes a pocketbook appeal to low-income voters; to maintain minority support they must fall back on explicitly racial issues. Thus, when Maryland Republicans signaled their openness to diversity by nominating an African American for lieutenant governor, Townsend could only counterattack by pointing to her opponent's past voting record on civil rights. She wound up making racial preferences the sound bite of the campaign's only debate. The New Democrats had come full circle to the domestic politics of George McGovern.

There are plenty of Democrats who can count better than the DLC and who understand that Democratic victory can't be built from the votes of minorities and the affluent alone. Judis and Teixeira round out their emerging Democratic majority by adding a "respectable showing" among economically motivated white working-class voters. They suggest that candidates accomplish this by combining a New Democratic suburban appeal with the older populist theme of the many against the privileged few.

Judis and Teixeira are undoubtedly correct about where a Democratic majority must come from. Votes must be won simultaneously from upscale suburbs, minorities, and the white working class. But the numerical weakness of the New Democratic coalition cannot be overcome simply by grafting a traditional economic appeal onto the DLC strategy. An election platform is not an arithmetic problem, solved by adding one constituency's issues to another's. Political programs gain support from one group of voters by showing them how their interests and values differentiate them from another group. Issues such as gun control that win votes from one Democratic constituency by setting it against another can blow a coalition apart.

There is more than one appeal that Democrats could make to the growing suburban constituencies. Historically, elite reformers have had the most resonance when confronting genuine scandal. From Grover Cleveland's creation of civil service to Archibald Cox's investigation of Watergate, indignation spread far beyond the narrow social milieu of the reformers. Today, there is the organized corruption of campaign finance and the malfeasance of the Enrons and Worldcoms. These issues engage the moral indignation of the affluent and educated—in the case of stock market scandals, their pecuniary interests too. And a focus on such matters is no impediment, to say the least, to winning votes among the working class.

As potent as these themes may be, New Democrats have abstained from raising them. The DLC has hardly been heard from on campaign reform, and it actually urged candidates

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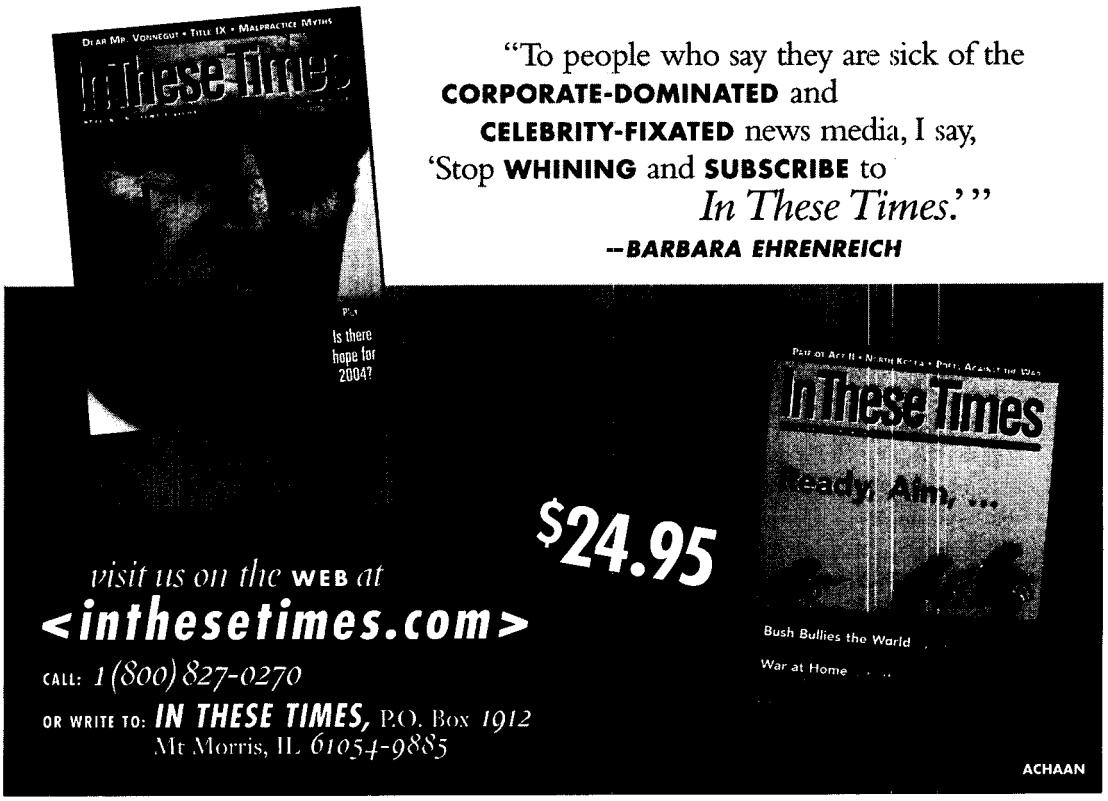
to avoid talking about Enron in last year's election. This reflects the organization's real constituency—not the minorities whose votes it takes for granted, nor even the soccer moms it lauds, but the business lobbies who pay the bills.

What makes New Democrats the new McGovernites is not their quest for the votes of the educated and affluent, but the means they use to that end. Barred by their big-business allegiances from a focus on the true scandals of the day, they bypass issues that could unite the "constituency of conscience" with constituencies worried about tomorrow's paycheck. Unable to appeal to the common citizenship of all, they call on the seamier side of elite altruism, the sentiment of moral superiority over the benighted white working class. The motivation, to be sure, differs from that of 1972, but the difference is not to the New Democrats' credit. Then, indignation at racism led to confrontations that incited white backlash. Today, fealty to corporate paymasters is the driving force. Whatever the inspiration, similar strategies yield the same result—a Democratic Party that makes itself a permanent minority. ●

BENJAMIN ROSS is a community activist who writes frequently for *Dissent*.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Europe: Remorse and Exhaustion

Pascal Bruckner is one of the leading figures of the Generation of 1968 in France—which is to say, he is someone who, in his student days, agitated for the revolution. And he is someone who, as he grew up, never lost the grand traits of the student uprising of '68: the instinct for the new and the fresh, the spirit of impudent truth-telling, the spirit of internationalism, the instinctive knowledge that politics and culture and sexuality cannot be divorced. These traits have made him one of the liveliest and most incisive intellectuals in France. And he commands the distinctively French art of the essay. Bruckner wrote one of the most important criticisms of left-wing self-delusion in The Tears of the White Man, *which I urge the readers of* Dissent *to examine. I have especially admired his* La Mélancolie démocratique *and* La Tentation de l'innocence*—the latter of which shows that, among the French writers today, no one has a better understanding of the United States. He has had a lot of success in France with his novels. And he has accomplished one other thing. In the 1990s, Bruckner was one of the intellectuals who succeeded in forcing France to intervene more forcefully in the Balkans—which eased the way for the United States to follow suit. This is, then, an admirable writer who is also an admirable man. In this present essay, he criticizes his fellow Europeans—and he criticizes the United States.*

—Paul Berman

Pascal Bruckner

For the last half century, Europe has been haunted by the demons of repentance. Ruminating over its past crimes—slavery, imperialism, fascism, communism—it has seen its history as nothing but a long litany of murder and rapine culminating in two world wars. The typical European man or woman is a sensitive creature always prepared to feel pity for the sufferings of the world and to assume responsibility for them, always asking what the North can do for the South rather than what the South can do for itself. By the evening of September 11, a majority of our citizens, despite their obvious sympathy for the victims, were telling themselves that the Americans had it coming. Make no mistake: the same argument would have been made if the terrorists had destroyed the Eiffel Tower or Notre Dame. Sensitive souls on both right and left would have urged us to flagellate ourselves: we've been attacked, so we're guilty. Our attackers are really poor people protesting against our insolent wealth and our western lifestyle. We Europeans spontaneously agree with our enemies in the way we judge ourselves, and we take shelter from the furies of the age by focusing on everyday economic and social problems.

The Ambiguities of Masochism

Europe gave birth to monsters. No doubt. But by the same token, it created the ideas that enable us to analyze and to destroy those monsters. Europe has an extraordinary and paradoxical nature. Consider the history. Feudal tyranny led to democracy, oppression by the church led to freedom of conscience, rivalry among nations led to the dream of an international community, overseas conquests led to anticolonialism, and revolutionary ideologies led to antitotalitarian movements. Like a jailer who throws you into a prison cell while slipping you the key, Europe simultaneously gave the world despotism and freedom. It sent soldiers, missionaries, and merchants to subdue distant lands. But it also invented anthropology, a way of seeing ourselves as others see us and of seeing others as they truly are. It moves us away from ourselves in order to come closer to the Other. The colonial adventure perished from its own basic contradiction. Colonialism subjected some continents to the laws of an-

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other continent and at the same time fostered the idea of nationhood and the right of self-determination. When the colonized demanded freedom, they simply turned against their masters the rules those masters taught them. Ever since the conquistadors, Europe has combined the greatest progress with the greatest cruelty. Still, a civilization guilty of the worst atrocities and capable of the most sublime achievements should not feel only remorse. The West did not invent genocide, but it invented the concept of "crimes against humanity." After 1945, Europe distanced itself from its own barbarism by giving these words a more precise definition—at the risk of turning the accusation of barbarism against itself.

EUROPE'S GREAT virtue lies in an awareness of its dark side, its pathologies, the fragility of the barriers protecting it from its own dishonor. This lucidity prevents Europe from calling for crusades of Good against Evil, proposing instead to struggle for the preferable against the dreadful, as Raymond Aron put it so well. Europe has taken shape through self-denying doubt. It judges itself pitilessly, and is constantly engaged in self-examination. If incrimination of the system is an integral part of the system itself; if, for example, the entire history of colonialism was shadowed by a powerful current of anti-colonialism, from Las Casas through Montaigne to Sartre, this is because, along with our greedy drive for expansion, we preserved spaces for dialogue and recognition of the relativity of beliefs. Since the Renaissance, we have developed the habit of conceiving truth as plural and not singular. Following the example of Europe, no people, no regime can now evade the duty of thinking against itself. We Europeans are obviously greedy, cowardly, and decadent. We are pathetic in our aspirations, and miserable in our pleasures. At least we know all this well enough to attempt to improve ourselves. Woe to the brutes who think they are civilized and lock themselves in an infernal circle of certainty!

But the suspicion that hovers over our most striking achievements always carries the risk of descending into self-hatred and facile defeatism. The third-worldism that set the wretched of the earth in opposition to the sated North is moribund as a political movement, yet it survives in our minds as a subtle poison, in the way we spontaneously denounce ourselves for the world's disorders. We live off the dividends of our self-accusation. We are supposedly forever in debt to the poor, the oppressed, the immigrants, and our only obligation is to expiate endlessly. Consider the wave of repentance sweeping through the continent nowadays—like an epidemic, especially in the major religions. This is an excellent thing, a salutary realization of past offenses, provided that other cultures and other beliefs also recognize their errors. Contrition cannot be restricted to a few and innocence attributed to everyone who claims to be persecuted. For too many countries, particularly in the Arab world, self-criticism is confused with the search for a convenient scapegoat: it's never their fault, always someone else's.

Christianity and Islam are both imperialist religions. Both are convinced that they possess the truth and have been prepared to save humanity despite itself, with the sword, the stake, and the Inquisition. But Christianity, worn down by four centuries of opposition from within Europe, has given ground and accepted the principle of secularism. The Catholic church accomplished its *aggiornamento* with Vatican II. And John Paul II completed this unprecedented process by addressing solemn apologies to the Jewish community, the Indians of Latin America, the Eastern Orthodox church, and Protestants, by recognizing the papacy's failure to accept major scientific discoveries since the fifteenth century, by condemning the Crusades, and by renouncing forced conversions. Rome, in keeping with its founding vocation, finally seems to have abandoned its temporal ambitions for purely spiritual aims. This long process of questioning remains to be accomplished for Islam, which is convinced that it is the last, and therefore the only authentic, revealed religion. The day on which its authorities ask forgiveness for crimes committed in the name of the Quran against infidels, unbelievers, and women will be a day of progress for all humanity. It will help to dissipate the mistrust many nations feel for this sacrificial monotheism. Not only is criticism of Islam not "reactionary," it is the only authen-

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tically Voltairean attitude to adopt at a time when millions of Muslims wish to practice their religion in peace, without the interference of doctrinal extremists. In France, a country with an anticlerical tradition, you can scorn, ridicule, and trample on Christianity with impunity. If you do the same to other beliefs, you will be accused of racism. The only authorized racism seems to be the anti-Christian variety.

Similarly, when the French media—as they should—focus on the torture committed by our army in Algeria, but then become discreet about identical horrors committed by the National Liberation Front, they help to create an appalling and slanted image of France. If all we brought to Algeria was oppression and war, how can we explain the fact that for the last thirty years so many Algerians have dreamed of emigrating to France, fleeing their country, which may be independent, but which has sunk into civil war and chaos? Likewise, America lost the Vietnam War, but it won the peace. As soon as the last GI left Saigon, thousands, and then millions, of Vietnamese took to the sea to escape from their liberators. The West cannot be wholly defined by imperial will. If all European history boiled down to the sinister and stupid blundering of crusaders and bloodthirsty adventurers searching for gold, why do so many of Europe's formerly subject peoples seek to join us and to adopt our values?

Europe's true crime is not only what it did in the past, but what it fails to do today: its inaction in Yugoslavia, its scandalous delay in Rwanda, its frightening silence in the face of the massacres in Chechnya. Obsessive attention to past abominations has blinded us to the horrors of the present. Repentance is not a policy, and the continent of Europe cannot model its relationship to the past on that of Germany. Neither the status of victim nor that of executioner is hereditary. The duty to remember implies nothing about the purity or guilt of descendants.

A Fatal Weariness

The United States, particularly the left wing of the Democratic Party, also lives with a guilty conscience. In the United States it concerns the genocide of the Indians, the slave trade, and segregation. Measures such as affirmative action were taken to attenuate the consequences of these terrible tragedies. Few societies have shown themselves so capable of declaring guilt, analyzing defects, and reforming. The Vietnam War pushed these tendencies to extremes. However, while Americans sometimes succumb to self-abuse, they also maintain the ability to reconcile a critical approach with self-affirmation. They express a pride in themselves and their country that is too often lacking on the other side of the Atlantic. Europe's worst enemy is Europe itself—its penitential vision of its past, its gnawing guilt, its disillusionment with itself. It pushes scruples to the point of paralysis.

How can we command respect if we do not respect ourselves, if we constantly depict ourselves, in literature and the media, in the darkest colors? The truth is that Europeans do not like themselves or at least not enough to overcome their disgust and to exhibit toward their own culture the quasi-religious fervor that is so striking in the Americans.

It is often forgotten that contemporary Europe did not come into existence as the United States did, with an enthusiastic vision of a new birth of history. It arose out of weariness with slaughter. It took the total disaster of the twentieth century to bring Europe to virtue. Without the world wars and their procession of horrors, there would never have arisen today's longing for peace, which is now confused with the longing for rest.

We may have become wise, but the wisdom is that of a sated brute, weary with slaughter, resigned to modest projects. European democracy resembles a rest cure that its once turbulent peoples have taken after losing their taste for battle. European democracy has become what remains after all other dreams have been abandoned: it secures a domain of great diversity, where it is good to live, to accomplish things, to prosper if possible, surrounded by masterpieces of culture. An admirable prospect, to be sure, because this kind of government limits the loss of human life and manages without violence. This calm life would be perfect in a time of great serenity, in a world that had finally achieved Kant's "perpetual peace."

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History's Minefield

We no longer love history; it is a minefield from which we struggled to escape after 1945 and again in 1989. But history continues to be made without us. Today, we are desperately lucid; that is, we have learned our lesson. The commitments of the past are over and done. When a crisis erupts, we do our utmost to delay. We temper our indignation with cynicism and treat the aggressor and his victim as equals, as though, in light of our own disenchantments, nothing made any difference. In every situation, we demonstrate the clairvoyance of the dupe who swears that he will not be taken in again. America mobilizes and acts. Europe snickers and stands by—a fearful colossus suffering from its great size, losing strength as it expands territory, Europe has become the Pontius Pilate of nations.

It is remarkable, for example, how we evade contemporary tensions, even on our own territory, and delegate responsibility to the Americans, only to criticize them mercilessly thereafter. Whatever it does, whether it abstains or intervenes, America is always wrong. In the Middle East and elsewhere, Europe no longer wants to get its hands dirty, only to hold them out in a passionate appeal to all men and women of goodwill. When those men and women reject our friendship, well, we leave it up to others to do what is necessary. We saw this in Bosnia in 1995, in Kosovo in 1999, and comic-opera style, when the European Union asked Washington to mediate the microscopic Spanish-Moroccan conflict over Parsley Island off the coast of Tangiers in the summer of 2002.

If Europe ever wants to be a "power," it will have to establish a defense force worthy of the name, or rather create among its citizens a state of mind that accepts the establishment of an army strong enough to intervene rapidly anywhere. (In October 2001, France had to lease Russian planes to contribute to the intervention in Afghanistan. Half its fleet of helicopters was grounded because of poor maintenance and a lack of spare parts.) This is the sticking point, because it would involve budgetary choices and therefore sacrifices.

Europe suffers from two complexes about its American "protector": the debtor's complex and the Peter Pan complex. Western Europe knows that without American help in the last century, it would have been wiped off the map or colonized by Soviet troops. But some expressions of generosity are forms of insult. The Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization increased the debt, and America was guilty even of the help it gave us. Even today, we still have the vague sense that in the case of serious trouble, our security depends more or less on our Yankee big brother. Nevertheless, we criticize him for subjugating our continent. We delight in casting all our sins onto this ideal scapegoat, because everything that goes wrong in the world can be laid at Washington's door. In the imagination of many intellectuals and political leaders, America plays the role the Jews once did in National Socialist demonology. Yet we do nothing to free ourselves from American domination. Quite the contrary. We persist in our refusal to grow up and assume our responsibilities. We would rather complain than act, cursing Uncle Sam while throwing ourselves into his arms at the slightest trouble. First we bark and then we give in. Consequently, our diplomacy is often confined to oppositional stances for lack of positive alternatives. All things considered, an American protectorate is preferable to others. It is easier to breathe under the indulgent aegis of Washington than it would be, say, under that of Moscow or Beijing. But no protectorate at all would be even better, and partnership is better than subjugation, even benign subjugation.

We have a choice: either we do what we must to achieve independence or we stop ranting and raving. For we can blame America for everything except our own apathy. Here is the paradox: the more we curse the United States, the more we depend on it. We are like a child who rebels against his parents so that he will never leave them. "Anti-imperialist" recriminations are specious insofar as they require the preservation of their target. They are mere rhetorical flourishes designed to conceal an actual renunciation. Our criticisms of American policies are often justified, but they would carry more weight if our continent, already under-

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mined by its internal divisions, did not demonstrate tragic fecklessness. It is hard to tell what is most hateful in present-day anti-Americanism; the stupidity and bitterness it manifests or the willing servitude that it presupposes toward a superiority it denounces—in order not to change it. The time for being anti-American has passed; we have to be pro-European instead, to increase our own strength.

Renewing Transatlantic Bonds

Whatever may happen, Europe and America are linked to one another. They embody two divergent conceptions of the Enlightenment, two outcomes of emancipation inaugurated in the eighteenth century. There is skepticism and the art of living on one side, and optimism and religiosity on the other. The first leads to failure to act, the second to adventurism. One side is obsessed with turning wolves into lambs, the other reduces the complexity of human affairs to the logic of military force. Europe always dreams of converting its adversaries into partners. After all, if we're nice to them they'll be nice to us. America is capable of identifying an enemy, exaggerating the threat it poses, and attacking it. If we are honest, we will of course recognize divisions of opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. And just as every military intervention is not necessarily warmongering, so every reservation and call for caution is not a replay of Munich. Intransigence pays—most of the time—but it can also turn into a quagmire, a national catastrophe. This is the real challenge to any intervention in Iraq, even though everyone favors the elimination of the butcher of Baghdad. Seldom has the gap been so small between the most salutary political action and the most unreasonable military campaign.

Commerce and Righteousness

It is an irony of history that Europe, the bastion of socialism and Marxism, now defines itself only in commercial terms, and that the anti-globalization movements see the world only through economics. They are willing prisoners of the very logic that they challenge. Europe's real spiritual father is not Immanuel Kant or Jean Monnet but Adam Smith. Smith was convinced of the (then) revolutionary idea that material abundance is the most effective means for domesticating human passions and civilizing the world. Conversely, America, home of the most enterprising capitalism, is the last great political nation of the West. It is the only nation able to "determine the exceptional situation" (Carl Schmitt), to rise above its particular interests in order to defend its underlying values, first of all freedom. It has the unique capacity to elevate its particular concerns and anxieties into priorities for the entire world. In this respect, September 11, with its spectacular drama, was perhaps a terrible opportunity. It forced us to think about democracy in terms of a struggle, as a concern for all humanity, and not just as a spontaneous growth arising from the market and the operation of international institutions. On September 11, one faction of radical Islam, itself eager for world domination, declared war not only on the West, on "Jewish and Christian pollution," but also on the rest of the world and particularly on its own moderate coreligionists, whom they accused of being lukewarm and corrupt. This is first of all a conflict within Islam. Still, it is up to us to retaliate without flinching, with force, but also by intellectual arguments that eschew insult while aiming to isolate fanatics (even if they come disguised as friends of tolerance), and to encourage secular forces and to empower women, the emblematic victims of Sharia. Never has Voltaire's famous call been more pertinent: *Ecrasons l'infâme*! September 11 reminded us that history remains tragic, that madness and barbarism, privatized in a criminal multinational organization, can flourish on the same soil as the democratic ideal and move parallel to it, using the most sophisticated technologies. Europeans think they have solved all problems by stopping mutual slaughter and establishing "no more war" as an inviolable dogma. This magnificent result, full of lessons for other nations, is not enough. If we confine ourselves solely to the prose of the world—to growth, wages, pensions, the thirty-five-hour work week—we will be unable to reconcile power and right and to rediscover a historic ambition worthy of our prosperity.

Democracy must be armed, heavily armed, to resist tyranny, to preserve its vocation of essential freedoms and to guarantee justice.

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However, neglecting political solutions in favor of saber-rattling is no solution either. In the past, Americans have paid dearly for their pious cult of the messianic nation, their unshakeable conviction of righteousness, their ingenuous belief that what is good for Uncle Sam is good for the rest of the planet. The American government sets itself above the law. Its refusal to ratify major treaties, its absurd and futile guerrilla warfare against the International Criminal Court, its contempt and arrogance toward the UN, and its shameful treatment of the prisoners in Guantánamo are disgraceful. These actions recall oddly those now defunct Marxist regimes that challenged bourgeois legality in the name of a higher proletarian truth. The United States sometimes gives the impression that it wishes to evade the constraints and duties of ordinary humanity. As a new front opens in Iraq, the Bush administration seems to have misread its own citizenry and to have forgotten the lessons of Vietnam. A liberal population drawn to abundance and individual development cannot transform itself for long into a mass military force and witness the death of many of its children without denying its basic freedoms. A hedonistic and individualistic society is naturally reluctant to accept sacrifices, regardless of the martial rhetoric with which it clothes its ambitions. The "USAers" may experience moments of great solidarity or bursts of patriotism, but they are not made to rule the world like Romans because the "message" of America is self-fulfillment and love of life. The culture of mobilization and fear has always been the favorite tool of dictatorship. Democracies can make only limited use of it before they destroy themselves. In this kind of enterprise, the danger always exists of adopting the logic of the enemy the better to defeat him, of expanding police power and militarization, and suspending or weakening the marvelous constitutional edifice forged by America's Founding Fathers. The birth of a new McCarthyism, thanks to the conservative right, would be Osama bin Laden's greatest victory over the country of Abraham Lincoln. "When fighting a monster, be careful not to become a monster yourself," said Nietzsche. The "neo-imperialist" lobby, which is very influential in the White House and which proposes to "democratize" the Middle East by force, may believe that America is invulnerable, but it fails to see that America lacks the resources to be an empire, even a "benevolent" one.

In fact, it is less American leadership than American discretion that is troubling. One has the sense that this sporadic policeman is not up to the mission it has adopted. An army whose official doctrine is "no casualties" is ill-suited to long, costly military expeditions. Some prestigious analysts such as Joseph Nye and Charles Kupchan have argued repeatedly that their country too easily confuses superpower status with omnipotence, and warn that unchallenged predominance cannot last for more than ten years. Intoxicated by its technological, cultural, and economic success; unable to take control of a new world order, America has forgotten that "the worst enemy of success is success itself," as David Landes put it. The omnipotence on which it prides itself is a burden too great for its shoulders alone. The brusque style of Washington has managed to antagonize its best friends by means of anachronistic ukases and its treatment of allies as unruly children. Unless it is ready to suffer another defeat, the United States must abandon its splendid smugness. It needs a strong Europe at its side—a Europe able to support it, but also able to criticize it, give it firm and friendly warnings against its symmetrical temptations of withdrawal and hegemony.

America can no more do without us than we can without America. Despite mutual suspicion, we are condemned to strengthen our ties and to increase transatlantic cooperation. If Europe wishes to have the slightest influence over the rest of the world, it is obliged to establish for itself a new pan-European democratic structure—an entity that would be unprecedented in its ambitions and political form, and that derives authority from the voluntary surrender of local and national sovereignty to a higher body. Reason demands that we convert European-American rivalry into emulation between two blocs that are both close and different from each other. They both have much to learn from one another about audacity and wisdom: how to temper American hubris with

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European moderation and European moderation with American dynamism. It is not a matter of choosing between the New and the Old World, because only a dialectic between the two is exciting, the source of fruitful prospects. The disputatious halves of the West have to be brought together because, with the notable exceptions of India and Japan, they remain the only guarantors of universal democracy. Our task at this historical moment is to reconcile Europe with history and to reconcile the United States with the world, to teach Europe that battles are not won by incantation and compromise, and to teach the United States that it is not alone in the world, charged with a divine mission that relieves Americans of seeking the approval of others, from listening to and arguing with them.

We Europeans can challenge the dominance of the English language and the finance capitalism of Wall Street (with its extraordinary compassion for the rich), we can easily denounce the ambiguities of the melting pot and the ravages of communitarianism, and we can reject a world made in the image of American society. But then we have to offer in its place something more than mockery and reproof. We must really construct better models of social justice, economic efficiency, and ethnic coexistence. We are far from doing so. We lag far behind the Americans, out of breath. We still imitate their mistakes after they have devised remedies. Some Europeans place their hope in a theory of reverse genesis. America, the offspring of the Old World that has surpassed its progenitor, would witness the birth of a new Europe that would then put the United States in its place. For now, since geopolitics is the contemporary form of fortune telling, this is nothing but wishful thinking. The bitter truth is that Europe lags behind our transatlantic cousin in almost every area. But our possibilities are enormous if we enact a genuine intellectual revolution. Europe is today's largest contemporary political and cultural laboratory; something unprecedented is happening there without its inhabitants' even being aware of it. Europe has to recover its civilizing capacities and its pride, not in blood and battle, but primarily in spiritual conquests. Europe holds its own cards. Either it will build a counterforce endowed with credible political and military tools or it will be vassalized, willingly. In the latter case, an aging and declining Old World will reduce itself to being a luxurious vacation resort, coveted by predators, and always prepared to abdicate its freedom for a little more calm and a little more comfort. ●

PASCAL BRUCKNER's books in English include *The Temptation of Innocence, The Tears of the White Man, Evil Angels,* and *The Divine Child.*

Translated from the French by George Holoch.

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Israel and the New Anti-Semitism

Shalom Lappin

SINCE THE COLLAPSE of the Oslo peace process and the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has generated an increasingly hostile view of Israel throughout Western Europe. Much of this reaction consists of sharp criticism of Israel's conduct in suppressing the Palestinian uprising in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. To the extent that this response is directed at Israel's actions and policies, it is legitimate comment on the behavior of a state and its government. The severity of the criticism can, in part, be attributed to the fact that Israel is a relatively strong, developed country that is using its army to sustain the occupation of a large Palestinian population that is politically dispossessed and suffering economically. As the current violence has become increasingly brutal on both sides, the asymmetry of power between Israel and the Palestinians and Ariel Sharon's determination to entrench the occupation through settlement expansion while forcing the Palestinians into virtual capitulation have seriously undermined European support for Israel.

There are, however, good reasons for doubting whether all the hostility directed at Israel can be construed simply as opposition to its policies. The obsessive focus of European journalists and opinion makers on Israel's war with the Palestinians contrasts sharply with the relative indifference of (much) liberal opinion to other recent, as well as ongoing human rights violations on a significantly larger scale. Slobodan Milosevic's bloody campaigns in Bosnia and Kosovo attracted little if any organized protest in Europe until the United States initiated a NATO bombing campaign to force the Serbian army out of Kosovo in 1999. At that point, European peace groups launched a series of large protests against the intervention. The fact that many European Union countries actively collaborated with the Milosevic government during the Bosnian War and did virtually nothing to stop its onslaught produced no apparent outrage among most purveyors of progressive politics in these countries. While the mass murder of more than six thousand Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica shocked some people, there was no demonization of Serbia, no calls for academic boycotts of Serbian universities. The International War Crimes Court in the Hague is prosecuting indicted Balkan war criminals, Milosevic foremost among them, while popular opinion in Europe, particularly on the left, has remained largely detached from the events that led to the court's creation.

Russia's unrestrained assault on Muslim separatists in Chechnya has been met with little more than occasional censure from human rights activists. It goes largely unreported and causes little if any concern in Europe. In both the Balkans and in Chechnya the level of violence and severe human rights abuses has been, to date, far higher than in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although this doesn't justify Israel's actions in the territories, it does raise serious questions concerning the motivation behind some of the current hostility to Israel. Both the Balkans and Russia are natural areas of European interest. They are close to home and involve countries with which Western Europe is closely involved. Why, then, is there such a stark contrast between the relative calm with which the Balkan and Chechen wars have been received on one hand and the intense reaction to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the other?

One explanation for the current European view of Israel runs as follows: Israel was established as an act of compensation to the Jews

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on the part of Western countries burdened with the guilt of the Holocaust. This guilt allowed them to disregard the cost that Israel's creation inflicted on the Palestinians, who were innocent of the Holocaust. Now that several generations have passed and Israel has become a regional superpower, the Europeans no longer wish to relate to Israel as a nation of victims. They insist on redressing the dispossession of the Palestinians.

The historical claim on which this view is based is incorrect. The United Nations partition plan of 1947 that established Israel was adopted largely because of American and Soviet support. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union suffered Holocaust guilt in 1947, nor should they have. They, together with Britain, were responsible for destroying Nazism and ending its genocide against the Jews. Stalin was staunchly anti-Zionist but supported the creation of Israel as a way of gaining political influence in a strategically important region still dominated by Britain. Truman remained undecided about partition until shortly before the vote, with both the State Department and the Pentagon split on whether or not to support the plan. Although historical and moral considerations seem to have played a role in Truman's decision, the desire to deepen American influence in the Middle East, displace Britain, and block Soviet penetration was probably the decisive factor in determining his position. Britain, the other major player in the partition debate, did its best to prevent the emergence of a Jewish state in Palestine. After the war it took the view that Jewish Holocaust survivors and refugees should be repatriated to the countries from which they had come. This included Polish Jews at a time when postwar pogroms were taking place in Poland against returning survivors. Britain blocked the immigration of Jewish refugees to Palestine right up until the end of its mandate in 1948. It abstained from the UN partition vote, and it actively supported the Jordanian Legion in the 1948 war. It changed its policy and supported Israel only in the early 1950s. The idea that the creation of Israel was the product of Western guilt over the Holocaust is, then, largely unfounded.

Nonetheless, the idea that Israel was created through Holocaust guilt has gained widespread currency in Europe. This idea is used to impose moral conditions on Israel that are not generally applied to other countries. If Israel was created as an act of expiation for crimes against the Jews, so this reasoning goes, then its legitimacy depends upon its not oppressing other people. The idea of Israel as a conditional concession wrung from the West through Jewish suffering in Europe goes some way toward explaining the glee (relief?) with which Israel's more strident European critics insist on comparing its treatment of the Palestinians to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. The obvious perversity and inappropriateness of the comparison is the source of its attraction. Not only are the victims of the Nazis transformed into the oppressors, but the basis of their collective legitimacy is undermined. The power of the comparison has not been lost on Arab nationalists and Islamic fundamentalists, who invoke it regularly.

More significant than Holocaust fatigue in shaping European responses to the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict is, I suspect, the fear that militant anti-Western sentiment in the Islamic world will bring large-scale terrorist violence to Europe, as it did to the United States on September 11, 2001. With the end of the cold war and the creation of a more integrated European Union in the 1990s, West Europeans embraced a vision of prosperity and human rights promoted through an expanded framework of international institutions. The shock of September 11 and the Bush administration's aggressive, often unilateral "War on Terror" have replaced this optimism with a profound fear that Europe will once again be drawn into bloody ethnic conflicts that it thought belonged to its past. This danger is not only external. The existence of large communities of Muslim immigrants in Europe, where Islamic activism flourishes, turns this into a local issue. To the extent that Israel has become the focus of a massive wave of Islamic anger, many Europeans have come to see it as a major liability. They hold the country responsible for the terrorist threat that they wish to avoid. Intense European criticism of Israel is, in part, aimed at heading off this danger and purchasing secu-

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rity by deflecting Arab and Islamic hostility.

Israel as a Jewish Polity

But even granting the role of Holocaust fatigue and fear of Islamic terrorism as important factors in conditioning the current European reactions to the Middle East, there is another element that surfaces with increasing frequency in the discussion of Israel. That is a general discomfort with the notion of Israel as a Jewish polity. Even when Israel's right to exist is affirmed, a common complaint among both European and Arab critics is that Israel's characterization of itself as a Jewish country is exclusionary and racist. Although this criticism has always been raised by the anti-Zionist left, it is now often expressed as a mainstream view in the European media. We should consider it carefully.

Laws and institutions that reserve rights and privileges for one ethnic group while excluding others are indeed discriminatory and incompatible with liberal democratic values. Unfortunately, discriminatory legal structures do exist in certain parts of public life in Israel, specifically in the use and development of land owned by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), which accounts for most public land in the country. These restrictions date back to the pre-state era, when the JNF was the instrument through which the Jewish community in Palestine acquired land for settlement and development. Arabs are still excluded from leasing and building on this land.

The Law of Return is a more complex case. It grants the right of residence and citizenship to Jews (and immediate non-Jewish family members) from abroad. This law recognizes as extra-territorial nationals Jews living in the diaspora. It has approximate parallels in the nationality laws of other countries (China, Japan, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Germany) that confer the right of citizenship or residence on people connected to the country by culture or descent. Unsurprisingly, the Palestinian Liberation Organization Charter proposes a similar law of return for Palestinians in the diaspora. For both Israeli Jews and Palestinians a law of return is regarded as a legal instrument for rehabilitating a nation of refugees in its national home. In general, laws that establish special rights for Jews derive from the formative period of the country when it was in the process of absorbing Jewish immigrants. Many Israelis of the liberal left who are committed to the existence of Israel as a Jewish country support the abolition of all these laws, with the possible exception of the Law of Return. Most Israelis regard the latter as still necessary for the protection of Jews living in unstable or repressive countries.

Critics of Israel who object to its identity as a Jewish state are, for the most part, not exercised by the fact that Iran and Saudia Arabia define themselves as Islamic states. They may reject their governments as theocratic and reactionary, but they do not regard these countries as illegitimate. They do not, in general, have problems with the religiously based partition of the Indian subcontinent between Pakistan and India, which took place at the same time as the creation of Israel. The implementation of this partition was accompanied by intense political violence that produced hundreds of thousands of refugees on both sides, most of whom have never returned to their homes. Most significantly, they have no difficulty whatsoever with Arab states that purport to be both secular and Arab. They see these states as natural political frameworks for the national groups that constitute their populations. The obvious question, then, is why they have such difficulty with a country that provides for the political independence of a Jewish population.

Assume the following utopian scenario. An enlightened liberal democratic government comes to power in Israel and reaches a peace agreement with the Palestinians: a full withdrawal to (the equivalent of) the 1967 borders and the establishment of a Palestinian state. This government then proceeds to eliminate all discriminatory legislation and institute a full separation of religion and state. It implements reforms to integrate the Arab minority into the social and economic mainstream of the country. Israel would still be a Jewish country in that it would have a decisive (80 percent) Jewish majority, its culture and history would continue to reflect the experiences and concerns of this majority, and its first language would remain Hebrew.

I suspect that many of its critics would con-

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tinue to object to Israel in this fully democratized format. These are the same people who reject as racist the proposal advanced by some on the Israeli left for a partition of Israel/Palestine along demographic lines; that is, that Israel should return as much territory as possible to the Palestinians, including areas currently within the green line that contain large numbers of Israeli Arabs. Many reject a two-state solution and favor a single country, "a secular democratic state of all its citizens." In fact, as they must know, such a state would either dissolve into civil war or become an Arab country with a subordinated Jewish minority. What lies behind their critique is less a concern for secular democracy than a deep hostility to the very idea of a Jewish state, even when it is cast as political independence for a large Jewish population under conditions of genuine democracy for all and equality for the non-Jewish minority. The objection to a Jewish polity of any sort in the territory of Israel/Palestine lies at the heart of Arab nationalist and Islamic hostility to Israel. It also informs much of the more extreme criticism of Israel that has recently entered the mainstream of political discourse in Europe.

The sense that much of the Arab and Islamic world simply cannot accept a Jewish political presence under any conditions has driven many Israelis to despair. After Oslo had raised hopes of a final peace agreement and reconciliation, the virulence of Palestinian and Arab hostility have persuaded a not insignificant part of the Israeli population that peace is impossible whatever concessions they make. This has produced a dangerous sense of helplessness and victimhood that effectively paralyzes the electorate into acquiescence in the brutal, expansionist policies of the right, even when most Israelis reject these policies. The specter of widespread European complicity in this challenge to Israel's basic legitimacy has further intensified its sense of isolation and reinforced de facto support for a disastrous right-wing adventure.

The rejection of a Jewish polity is closely related to a refusal to recognize the collective legitimacy of the Jews as a people who are entitled to a place among the nations of the world. This idea is deeply rooted in both European and Islamic sources. It has assumed a variety of religious and political forms in the past, and we may well be witnessing the emergence of a new version of this traditional theme.

Messianism and Replacement Theology

Late biblical and rabbinic Judaism introduced the idea of a messianic age in which peace and justice would be established for all humanity in real historical time. The concept of the messianic age is the result of a remarkable evolution from the demand for a national savior to deliver the people from external oppression (as in the period of the judges and the kings) to a universalist vision of a redeemer who ushers in a just social order. The messianic idea animated Jewish resistance to Roman occupation and sustained the Jews for centuries in the diaspora.

In appropriating the Jewish messianic vision Christianity sought to replace the Jews as the heirs of the covenant with God within which this vision was defined. In order to achieve this expropriation it was necessary to portray the Jews as perverse nonbelievers who had forfeited their right to the covenant through their refusal to accept the Messiah. Jews were offered the choice of giving up their Jewish identity and joining the church in order to enter the New Covenant, or existing as a despised religious minority excluded from the social mainstream. It is important to recognize that orthodox Christian doctrine accorded the Jews a recognized role as an outcast community, in contrast to heretics, who were not tolerated at all. The marginality of Jews in the traditional Christian world was intended to emphasize the stigma that attached to their rejection of the new messianic order. The price for acceptance was, then, a total renunciation of Jewish life. The intensity of Christian anti-Semitism was due in part to the persistence of self-affirming Jewish communities in the midst of Christian societies, for these communities testified to the failure of the Christian messianic enterprise to displace its predecessor and so complete its universal project.

Islam also began its history with a failed overture to the Jews. Initially it received a positive response from Jewish tribesmen and rabbinic authorities in Arabia, who recognized the close affinity between the Prophet Muham-

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mad's robustly monotheistic teachings and traditional Jewish belief. However, conflict soon developed when the Jews refused to give up their Judaism to embrace the new religion. The Jews, together with the Christians, were assigned the status of *el dhimmi*, a protected religious minority living on the fringes of Islamic society. Islam understands itself as incorporating the religious insights of both Judaism and Christianity while superseding them. Unlike Christian Europe, the Muslims did not regard the Jews as a threat to their hegemony, nor did they subject them to systematic, large-scale violence. However, the price that the Jews paid for refusing to accept Islam's messianic project was, again, existence in a marginalized community. Although their situation was far better than the one that they endured in the Christian world, there are obvious parallels between the positions that each society assigned them.

While traditional Islam does not recognize the legitimacy of any non-Islamic political power, the ongoing competition between Islamic and Christian empires that played out from the Middle Ages into the modern era forced pragmatic acceptance of non-Muslim rule in formerly Islamic territories such as Spain, Greece, and the Balkans. By contrast, the Jews never had collective political power at any point in this period, and so the question of accommodation with a Jewish political entity was not an issue. Similarly, Christian Europe had no need to deal with Jewish military or political power, and therefore the idea of a Jewish polity simply did not arise. In both Christian and Muslim domains the Jews were understood entirely as a dependent minority defined by its refusal to disband and join the new majority order.

Secular Messianism and the European Left

With the emergence of secular civil societies in Western Europe following the French Revolution, Jews were offered the possibility of social and political emancipation without explicitly renouncing their Judaism. However the conditions of this offer required that Jews enter the new social order on a strictly individual basis and abandon their view of themselves as constituting a people. The ideal recommended to them was full assimilation. Reconstitution as a religious denomination on the model of Christian churches would be tolerated. But to the extent that Jews insisted on retaining a connection to a collectivity, they would be stigmatized as an obstinately atavistic group clinging to an unwelcome foreign identity. Count Stanislas–Marie–Adélaide de Clermont–Tonnerre provided a particularly clear formulation of this view of the Jew in a civic society in his "Speech on Religious Minorities and Questionable Professions" delivered to the French National Assembly on December 23, 1789.

> We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals. We must withdraw recognition from their judges; they should only have our judges. We must refuse legal protection to the maintenance of the so-called laws of their Judaic organization; they should not be allowed to form in the state either a political body or an order. They must be citizens individually. But, some will say to me, they do not want to be citizens. Well then! If they do not want to be citizens, they should say so, and then, we should banish them. It is repugnant to have in the state an association of non-citizens, and a nation within the nation.

Where European liberalism insisted that Jews give up their involvement with a religiously defined collectivity as a condition for acceptance in the new civic democracy, the mainstream of the revolutionary European left refused to accept a culturally autonomous secular Jewish proletariat committed to class struggle alongside the working-class movements of other nations. The Jewish Labor Bund was persecuted by the Bolsheviks and then by Stalin. Trotsky and his followers also rejected it.

In contrast to the Zionists, the Bund did not seek the creation of a Jewish state, nor did it endorse a territorial solution to Jewish oppression in Eastern Europe. It envisioned the emergence of autonomous Jewish communal and cultural institutions within a socialist society. The Bund enjoyed widespread support in Poland and the Russian pale of settlement, where three to four million Jews constituted approximately 13 percent of the population. It argued that the Jewish population in Eastern Europe was an oppressed national minority that

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should be permitted to take its place among other peoples in the struggle for a just society.

The left's problem with the Bund was not one of accepting a religious community in a secular society. The Bund's heresy was neither territorialism nor unacceptable ideas on the nature of socialism, but its demand that Jews be recognized as a people and permitted to sustain their language and their cultural institutions. The revolutionary left claimed to respect the rights of all peoples to self-determination and defended the rights of national minorities in other cases. Its refusal to apply these principles to Jews who sought to participate in the revolutionary movement as Jews exposes its thoroughgoing inability to cope with any form of Jewish collective life.

In effect both classical European liberalism and the revolutionary European left offered the Jews a secular version of the traditional Christian choice: either discard involvement with the Jewish people and achieve individual acceptance in a new liberated era or suffer stigmatization and marginalization as perverse holdouts against the mainstream. The choice expressly excluded the possibility of existing as a free nation among other nations.

Given that the view of the Jewish people as an illicit nation is so deeply ingrained in both religious and secular European culture, it is not surprising that assimilation failed to eliminate European anti-Semitism. Most Jews who adopted variants of this strategy soon found that their attempts to sever connections with collective Jewish life generated the suspicion that they had not fully renounced their forbidden loyalties. They were all the more threatening for having receded into the limbo of nonexistence imposed upon them by classical liberals and revolutionary socialists. The issue was not simply Jewish collectivity but Jewish visibility. Leon Pinkser's critique of assimilation (*Auto-Emancipation*, 1882) as a means of escaping oppression proved to be entirely correct.

A large part of the contemporary European left has inherited the liberal and revolutionary antipathy toward a Jewish collectivity, with Israel becoming the focus of this attitude. While acculturated Jewish intellectuals and progressive Jewish activists are held in high esteem, a Jewish country is treated as an illegitimate entity not worthy of a people whose history should have taught them the folly of nationalism. The current intifada is regarded as decisively exposing the bankruptcy not so much of a policy of occupation and settlement, but of the very idea of a Jewish polity, which could not but do otherwise than commit such misdeeds. These underlying attitudes are clearly expressed in Perry Anderson's extended editorial article "Scurrying towards Bethlehem" (*New Left Review*, July-August, 2001). Anderson is at pains to show Zionism as a nationalist movement begotten in the sin of collaboration with European colonialism and sustained by continuing involvement with American imperialism. He envisages the de-Zionization of Israel as a necessary condition for a reasonable solution to the conflict. Interestingly, the fact that Arab nationalism and the various states that emerged from it were also deeply involved with European colonialist ventures plays no part in his story. Moreover, he does not regard Palestinian nationalism in particular and Arab nationalism in general as problematic phenomena. The former is understood solely as the engine of a progressive movement for national liberation. It seems, then, that the reasonable demands for graduation to a postnationalist politics and for a critique of historical myths apply exclusively to Israeli Jews. Palestinians and other Arab nationalists are exempt from these requirements as their national movements are inherently progressive, even if occasionally misguided in their formulations.

In the course of his article Anderson makes the important observation that Israel is unique as a settler state because its immigrants had no mother country in whose colonial interests they were dispatched. This insight should have alerted him to the important difference between the historical reasons that brought Israel into being and those that produced other immigrant-based settler countries, and hence to the inapplicability of a simple-minded analogy between Israel and these products of colonialism. Instead, he suggests that the power of Jewish economic and political influence in America has transformed the United States into an effective mother country for Israel. "Entrenched in business, government and media, American Zionism has since the sixties acquired a firm grip on

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the levers of public opinion and official policy toward Israel, that has weakened only on the rarest of occasions. Taxonomically, the colonists have in this sense at length acquired something like the metropolitan state—or state within a state—they initially lacked."

The specter of a Jewish-Zionist lobby/conspiracy that controls state power and the media, particularly in America, has become a significant theme in the writings of left-wing political journalists in Europe. So, for example, Robert Fisk ("I am Being Vilified for Telling the Truth About Palestinians," *Independent*, December 13, 2000) and John Pilger ("Why My Film is under Fire," *Guardian*, September 23, 2002) insist that a powerful Zionist lobby operating in Britain but directed from America is working with considerable success to suppress all objective reporting and critical discussion of Israel. The January 14, 2002, issue of the *New Statesman* ran two articles on the Zionist lobby. The cover of the issue featured a large golden Star of David piercing the center of a British flag over the caption "A kosher conspiracy?" The first piece, by Dennis Sewell, concluded that the lobby, to the extent that it exists, is largely ineffective in stemming the tide of hostile reporting and comment on Israel. But the second article, by Pilger, repeated his claim of Zionist power in the British government and the press. It also included the comment that "Blair's meeting with Arafat served to disguise his support for Sharon and the Zionist project." For Pilger, then, Sharon's appalling policies are only derivative problems. The real target is the country as such, reduced to an ideological slogan as "the Zionist project." Peter Wilby, editor of the *New Statesman*, apologized for the offensive cover in an editorial that appeared in the February 11, 2002, issue. He explained that it had been innocently intended to attract attention on the newsstand. He did not address the obvious question of why a venerable publication of the Labour left should choose to use an image clearly reminiscent of Nazi iconography to promote its sales. It is too facile to dismiss this incident as a passing mistake of judgment. Sneering chatter of a powerful international Jewish lobby, once the stock and trade of fascist propaganda, has now become a staple of left-wing comment on Israel in the British and European press. By contrast, the activities of Arab, Muslim, and pro-Palestinian advocacy groups in the media and public discussion of the Middle East have gone largely unremarked. It is generally assumed, quite reasonably, that such groups have a natural role to play in debates on conflicts that concern them directly. Oddly, these assumptions do not extend to Jewish and Israeli advocacy groups.

The contrast between Europe and North America in this matter is clear. While by no means free of anti-Jewish prejudice, North America defines itself as an immigrant society in which ownership of the country is not the preserve of a single native group. Jews function like other immigrant communities, most of which have succeeded in developing hyphenated personae, easily combining their ethnic identities with their active presence in the mainstream of American life. It is not surprising, then, that public Jewish visibility and the notion of a Jewish polity seem to pose less difficulty in America than in Europe and the Middle East.

Although much of the criticism directed against Israel in the past two years of the intifada is legitimate if not always accurate, the growing hostility to the country stems, at least in part, from acute resistance to a Jewish polity and general difficulties with Jewish collective life. These attitudes are deeply rooted in the histories of both Europe and the Islamic world. The problem of distinguishing bigotry from reasonable opposition is difficult, given that in Israel the Jews are no longer dispossessed, but citizens of a powerful country with a large army that is now being used to sustain the occupation of another people. When considering the critical response to Israel it is reasonable to insist that it be accorded the same legitimacy and judged by the same principles as other countries. To require less of Israel is to allow it to claim rights that are denied to others. To demand more is to invoke a unique set of standards motivated by traditional prejudices. Both positions are unreasonable and must be resisted. ●

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New Hope for Brazil?

Stanley Gacek

On October 27, 2002, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva—lathe operator, leader of the independent Brazilian labor movement that emerged in the late 1970s to challenge the military regime, a founder of the Brazilian Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores—PT), and a former congressman from São Paulo—was elected president of Latin America's most powerful state, the world's fifth largest country, with more than 170 million inhabitants, and the ninth largest economy on the globe. His victory was unprecedented in Brazilian history: fifty-two million votes, 61 percent of the total.

The Lula "Era," as it is being called in Brazil, has raised the hopes of leftists throughout the world. The Lula–PT platform calling for sustainable macroeconomic growth and the reduction of poverty and inequality offers a powerful and tangible alternative to the dominant paradigm of globalization. As Lula declared in his inaugural address of January 1, ending unemployment "will be my obsession" and ending hunger must be "a national endeavor." He has pledged to create at least ten million new and decent jobs by the end of his four-year term, as well as guarantee three meals a day for every Brazilian.

Lula's opposition to any version of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) that promotes "an economic annexation" of the South to the North augurs a substantial delay if not a fatal blow to any North American Free Trade Agreement expansion in the hemisphere. There can be no FTAA without Brazil. Foreign Affairs Minister Celso Amorim made it clear to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick that his country would not be rushed into any hemispheric trade agreement—a troubling admonition for Washington, as Brazil and the United States will be co-chairing the FTAA negotiations in 2003. This new relation of forces concerning trade and the world economy led Emir Sader, a well-known University of São Paulo sociologist, to announce "the beginning of the end for the neo-liberal project in Latin America."

Lula's PT is now the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies, moving from 58 to 91 seats (out of a total of 513), as well as the third-largest party in the Senate, with an increase from 8 to 14 (out of 81). Obviously, these numbers are well short of a majority, and the PT has been compelled to maintain and consolidate alliances with other parties of both the left and the center-right.

Nevertheless, Lula's electoral coalition already included other significant parties, and a number of them are represented in his new cabinet, reinforcing the alliance he needs to govern effectively. The PT and the Lula administration have negotiated deftly with the Brazilian Congress. Executive Chief of Staff José Dirceu persuaded the center-right Brazilian Democratic Mobilization Party, which commands one of the largest legislative blocs, to elect leaders amenable to agreements with the new government. This latest negotiation guarantees a pro-Lula majority of 283 seats in the Chamber and 47 in the Senate.

The Brazilian people decided to give Lula their mandate after two decades of military dictatorship (1964-1985), a return to democracy followed by the sudden death of the civilian president, a grueling presidential impeachment process in the early nineties, and eight years of the administration of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Cardoso's administration succeeded in reducing inflation, following the prescription of the Washington Consensus, but it also produced growing inequality, higher unemployment, greater violence, and an astronomical increase in debt and interest rates. Much of

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Brazilian civil society, including business, opted for Lula because of his commitment to greater growth and social stability. Brazilian textile magnate José Alencar of the Liberal Party (PL), Lula's running mate and now vice president, represents the strong belief among national industrialists that macroeconomic stimulus is desperately needed.

Now Lula faces the challenge of managing and satisfying the soaring expectations of his supporters. For example, the landless movement, or Movimento Sem Terra (MST), responsible for many of the rural conflicts and occupations of the last decade, expects sweeping agrarian reform to overturn a system in which less than 3 percent of the population control more than 60 percent of the arable land. Gilmar Mauro, one of the top leaders of the MST, is demanding that the new government immediately expropriate "all lands belonging to owners who owe money to the state, as well as all lands left fallow." He insists that titles must be awarded now to at least a hundred thousand families currently occupying unproductive farms, and promises that the landless movement will continue to pressure the Lula administration until all its demands are satisfied.

A NUMBER OF union leaders who began as young labor activists in the *novo sindicalismo* movement of the 1970s and 1980s and were founders of both the PT and the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT), Brazil's largest trade union center, representing more than twenty-two million workers, have long advocated a major overhaul of the state-corporatist system of labor relations and union governance. With the presidency of the country now occupied by a metalworker who once challenged a military regime relying on state control of the union movement to repress collective worker action, these unionists say that it is high time to end labor's dependence on the state for support of union structures. Not surprisingly, these activists see a political opportunity: they want a new labor law that will weaken the position of more conservative trade union leaders.

The Brazilian labor movement will also expect Lula to make good on his announced intention to create jobs. By the end of the 1990s, the official unemployment rate (which does not reflect chronic underemployment and the high number of Brazilians permanently discouraged from seeking work) exceeded 7 percent. In São Paulo, Brazil's largest metropolis, 20 percent of the working population is unemployed, making for two million people without jobs. And the number of unregistered, informal workers in the Brazilian economy rose from 42 percent to 58 percent of the total labor force in the last ten years, with more than 4.3 million jobs being eliminated in the formal sector.

And the Brazilian majority expects Lula to reform the social security regime. The current public system of retirement and disability benefits actually covers only 57 percent of the eligible beneficiaries. It has generated an unsustainable deficit of more than seventy billion *reais* (well over twenty billion dollars), exacerbating Brazil's debt crisis and causing interest rates to climb. The growth of the informal sector erodes the tax base and cuts revenue. Moreover, certain public servants, including top military officers, high-ranking judges, and elite personnel in the executive branch, benefit disproportionately from the system. All told, public sector employees represent 11 percent of social security beneficiaries and receive 45 percent of the benefits.

Social Security Minister Ricardo Berzoini, former president of the São Paulo Bank Employees Union, has called for a more uniform system in which elite public servants will not receive inordinately more than other workers. Although Berzoini is not proposing to make the more egalitarian disbursement retroactive, many military officers and judges argue that any reform will interfere with their "acquired rights." And the leaders of the CUT-affiliated federal employee unions, many of whom supported Lula's electoral campaign and are among the most left-wing activists in the Brazilian labor movement, will resist tampering with the current system.

In addition to the expectations of domestic constituencies, Lula must confront the antagonistic pressures of external interests and institutions. Precisely because the new government will not be a pushover on the FTAA, multinational enterprises and global capital, along with

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their friends in Washington, will have every motivation to isolate and control Brazil. And with the accumulated public debt rising from 29.2 percent of gross domestic product in 1994 to well over 55 percent at present, a total of approximately 250 billion dollars, the Lula government is particularly vulnerable to the demands of international creditors and financial institutions. The International Monetary Fund's thirty billion dollar loan package negotiated at the end of last year with President Cardoso (once a left-wing sociologist who told big business during his successful 1994 electoral campaign "to disregard everything that I published") imposes high primary budget surplus requirements that may hamstring Lula's program.

In an obvious effort to show both Wall Street and the international financial institutions that the Lula administration will be fiscally responsible, Finance Minister Antônio Palocci has announced a 2003 primary surplus goal of 4.25 percent of GDP, surpassing the IMF's demand of 3.88 percent. In addition, Central Bank Governor Henrique Meirelles, a former chief executive of FleetBoston, has resisted lowering interest rates in an effort to avoid runs on Brazil's currency and an inflationary spiral. (The consumer price index for São Paulo revealed a 2.19 percent increase in January, the highest recorded for any January since 1995.)

Unfortunately, not all the financial analysts are impressed. Although the rating agency Standard and Poor's has praised Palocci and Meirelles for a "prudent and cautious policy stance," it also sent a poisonous message to the markets on January 16, asserting that the Lula administration has "limited room for policy maneuverability in a challenging global and domestic environment."

THE NEW government's understandable attempts to avoid subversion by international finance also threaten to undo Lula's plans for macroeconomic recovery and social justice. Excessive fiscal conservatism and high interest rates will only stanch growth and erode the support from national business on the right and from unions and social movements on the left. Already, leftist militants in the PT have accused the Lula government of selling out to the IMF and the markets.

Academics and journalists have been mixed in their appraisal of Lula's capacity to deal with the formidable domestic and international challenges he faces. *Newsweek* posed the question last October, "Can Lula really lead?" and cited a Wall Street source who claimed that the new president was thoroughly "untested." Peter Hakim, from the Inter-American Dialogue, in a *Washington Post* op-ed, asked whether Lula is the "champion for Brazil's poor majority," challenging "the country's power brokers" and battling "its deep social injustices"—or is he "newly moderated," accepting "market economics" and "pluralist politics"?

In an article appearing in the *New York Review of Books* last December, Kenneth Maxwell of the Council on Foreign Relations claimed that Felipe Gonzalez and the Spanish Socialist Workers Party represent "one of the models for the Brazilian PT," having also managed to shake off a Marxist past and "move to the center ideologically." According to Maxwell, "perhaps 30 percent of the PT call themselves radicals . . . but most party members have learned to play the democratic game."

Right-wing commentators, such as Constantine Menges of the Hudson Institute, claim to know about a sinister plot being engineered by Lula and the PT that will give new life to the international communist conspiracy. Although Menges's published musings border on the psychotic, they certainly influenced Representative Henry Hyde, chair of the House International Relations Committee. Hyde wrote to President Bush on October 24, warning that Lula was a dangerous "pro-Castro radical who for electoral purposes had posed as a moderate," and likely could form "an axis of evil in the Americas" with Cuba and Hugo Chavez's Venezuela. Such a diabolical alliance would have ready access to Brazil's "30-kiliton nuclear bomb" as well as its "ballistic missiles."

The problem with most of these opinions is that they ignore the remarkable twenty-five year political development of Lula, the PT, and Brazil itself. The trade unionists, human rights advocates, progressive clergy, academics, and other opponents of the military dictatorship who founded the Workers Party more than twenty years ago were dedicated to building a

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new and unprecedented movement, which would break radically from the Brazilian tradition of top-down populist and *caudilho* politics. They succeeded in constructing a political force that is thoroughly open, ecumenical, non-doctrinaire, mass-based, and internally democratic. Although the PT accepted members who claimed allegiance to revolutionary ideals (many of whom are currently excoriating the government for compromising its socialist principles), it also rejected Leninist vanguardism and "democratic centralism" as defined by the orthodox communist left. PT militants did not simply "learn to play the democratic game" in Brazil; for all intents and purposes, they *created* it.

In a 1991 press interview in Mexico City, Lula made it clear that the PT never accepted the Soviet model, nor did it have to "renounce" a dogmatic past: "From its birth, the PT criticized Eastern Europe. We criticized the Berlin Wall, state bureaucracy, the absence of union freedom; we defended Walesa from the moment we were founded."

As Johns Hopkins political scientist Margaret Keck has correctly observed, the PT's socialism was never a dogmatic ideology, but rather an "ethical proposal, within which a number of alternative visions of the good society competed . . ." For Keck, the party's moral aspiration for socialism has been "an aspiration for democracy."

It is also misleading to imply that a "newly moderated" Brazilian Workers Party has only recently learned to deal with "pluralist politics" and "market economics" and that Lula is "untested." Over the last twenty years, the Workers Party has built a successful and corruption-free record of governing hundreds of cities, including the world's third-largest, São Paulo, as well as several important state governments. In addition, hundreds of able PT activists have served in the Brazilian Congress, including Lula himself. None of this could have happened had the PT not respected the principles of democratic pluralism and coped with the realities of a market economy.

As for the "axis of evil" theory, Menges, Hyde, and other fearmongers should be reminded that Lula has spoken out forcefully against the spread of nuclear arms and has promised Brazil's total compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Like many other Latin American leaders and statesmen, Lula maintains constructive relations with the current leadership in Cuba and Venezuela. However, he has said that Castro needs to encourage internal democracy, and he has admonished Chavez for "acting like a military officer" rather than "a civilian politician" when dealing with the Venezuelan opposition. Although the anti-Chavez forces have denounced Brazil for sending oil and humanitarian assistance to Venezuela, Lula's special secretary for foreign relations, Marco Aurelio Garcia, recently assured me that the aid is meant to encourage peaceful negotiations and an outcome that will respect Venezuela's democratic institutions and rule of law.

THE LULA administration has so far demonstrated good faith in responding to Brazil's domestic constituencies and their demands. The new government has convened a National Social and Economic Council that directly involves representatives from all segments of Brazilian civil society—national business, the trade unions, the religious community, cooperatives, and civil and human rights organizations—for the purpose of negotiating an inclusive social pact. By the end of 2003, the Executive will have presented the Council's proposals to the Congress that address the country's most pressing issues, including social security, tax, and agrarian reform. In addition, the new government is convening a National Forum on Labor to review all the employment, labor rights and labor relations concerns facing Brazil. After extensive debate and negotiation among government, trade union, and business representatives, the Forum will also have its proposals delivered to the Congress by the end of the year.

This inclusion of Brazilian civil society in serious negotiations is something that Lula's predecessors were both unwilling and unable to do. Without question, the task is not an easy one. CUT President João Felicio has already made it clear that social pact discussions do not mean that labor will give in on wages and working conditions. And speaking for the interests of capital, Alencar Burti, president of the São Paulo Chamber of Commerce, an-

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nounced, "I am not interested in talking about what I'm supposed to give up."

Nevertheless, by involving all representative groups in the decision-making process, the new government is engaging in constructive dialogue with Brazilian society, as well as with its own current and potential opposition. Lula claims that agrarian reform will go forward during his administration precisely because he and his government will actually sit down with the MST and negotiate.

Several of the new government's ministers have proposed specific public policy initiatives. Labor minister Jaques Wagner is considering reducing the standard workweek from forty-four to forty hours in order to increase employment. Wagner has spoken of targeted tax incentives and subsidies to employers who hire more workers by reducing hours without cutting wages and benefits. Economist Paul Singer, recently named Secretary of the *Economia Solidária* (Solidarity Economy), is proposing the massive creation of service, family farm, labor, and microcredit cooperatives as a means of putting thousands of Brazilians back to work.

Although the IMF's draconian pressures and Wall Street's insatiable demand for "fiscal responsibility" could spell political and economic disaster, there are several factors working in Brazil's favor. For example, World Bank President James Wolfensohn has openly praised the new government, and has committed funding to Jaques Wagner's youth employment programs and to Lula's anti-hunger campaign. The plans to multiply domestic credit sources could help reduce the dependence on foreign investment. And the Argentine tragedy should have taught a serious lesson to the world's financial markets and institutions: if Lula is not allowed to bring a minimal amount of growth and social stability to Latin America's largest economy, the prospects for security in the hemisphere are bleak.

The international union movement can play an important role in helping to ameliorate some of the external pressures. For example, workers' pension funds are responsible for literally trillions of dollars in financial markets and can exert substantial influence when it comes to Wall Street's relationship with Brazil. In addition, the labor-friendly social development projects of the Lula administration suggest interesting partnerships with international workers' capital.

More direct contacts between unionists from the United States and Brazil, as well as exchanges involving city and state governments, small agricultural producers and family farmers, educators, musicians, artists, and progressive legislators, can only enhance North American support for Brazil's new democratic hope, as well as help to counter any revanchism on the part of the Bush administration. And the AFL-CIO and its affiliates have a promising opportunity to work with the Lula government to guarantee labor rights to the more than one million Brazilians living and working in the United States.

Lula is well aware of the importance of international union solidarity to his success, as he made clear to hundreds of admirers from the U.S. labor movement who were present at AFL-CIO headquarters to receive him during his visit to Washington last December. He deserves, and needs, many more friends. For the real question is not whether "Lula can lead" or whether "Lula can succeed." The real question is whether the world can afford for Lula to fail. ●

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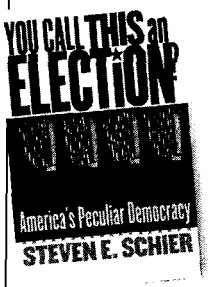

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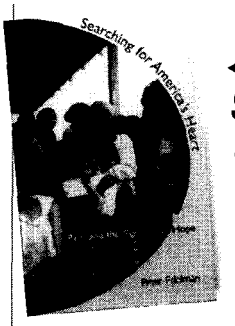

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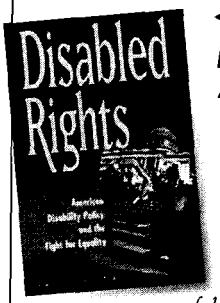

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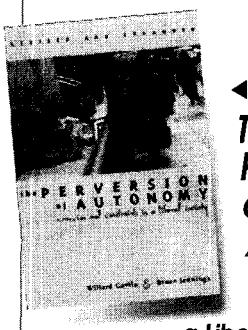

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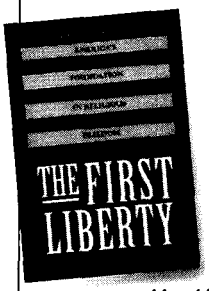

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Pluralism and the War on Terror

Gary Gerstle

In the last one hundred years, war-induced worries about unity and loyalty have led to fears of foreigners in our midst and campaigns to restrict their rights and opportunities. This has been especially true at times, such as the 1910s and 1940s, during the two world wars, when immigrants and their children have constituted a large percentage of the American population. Levels of cultural pluralism that were accepted in peacetime became intolerable once the United States entered World War I, and in both wars, particular groups—German Americans and Japanese Americans especially—suffered severe repression. In the immediate aftermath of World War I, so did eastern and southern European immigrants, who were accused of anarchism and communism.

Given this history, it seems appropriate to ask how the "War on Terror" that the United States has been fighting since September 11, 2001, is affecting the American experiment with diversity and pluralism. This war, like the two world wars, is being waged at a time when the presence of immigrants and their children in the general population is high; when one group in particular, defined either as Arab Americans or as Muslim Americans, is tied by nationality, ethnicity, or religion to our foes; and when worries about internal security have intensified nationalism and suspicions of cultural and religious difference. Given these circumstances, this war can be construed as a test of the multicultural society that many Americans have labored to create, a society that values diversity and treats as fundamentally equal groups that are culturally, racially, and religiously different from the majority.

I want to examine how we are faring in this test by putting current developments in the context of how America performed in similar situations in World War I and World War II. I first ask how the experience of Arab and Muslim Americans since 9/11 has been similar to and different from that of Japanese Americans in World War II, German Americans in World War I, and southern and eastern Europeans after World War I. I then ask, more generally, what effect the War on Terror is having on multiculturalist beliefs and practices in the United States.

Some may think that the comparison of the War on Terror with the two world wars is unfair. The current war has not required anything resembling the mobilization of economic resources, war matériel, and military personnel necessitated by the world wars. Yet the sense of vulnerability that we feel, as a result of the success of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, is great. Certainly, the Bush administration understands itself to be engaged in an all-out war, not a limited one. Only during the world wars and the tensest moments of the cold war did our government arrogate to itself the kind of powers to suspend civil liberties that it has now taken through the Patriot Act and related measures. Thus, it seems appropriate to ask whether the intolerance and repression of those eras have resurfaced in the War on Terror.

The answer turns out to be complex. On the one hand, beliefs in racial equality and cultural diversity have sunk deep roots in America these last thirty years, making a mass round-up of Arab and Muslim Americans on the model of Japanese internment far more difficult to justify or enact. For the same reason, it seems unlikely that we will see campaigns to obliterate Islamic culture or to enforce a high degree of cultural homogeneity on all immigrant Americans that recall the anti-German and antipluralist crusades of World War I. And

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yet, there has been an alarmingly large number of violent and hostile acts committed against Arab and Muslims Americans since 9/11 and an intensifying government campaign to restrict, and even end, Arab and Muslim immigration to the United States. The historical precedent that does illuminate these developments is one that unfolded more quietly and insidiously than either Japanese American internment or the World War I assault on German Americans: that which Italian and Jewish Americans experienced in the 1920s, when they were stigmatized as inferior, barred from immigrating to the United States, and pressured to adopt "proper" American values. There are grounds for worrying that this damaging policy could be unfolding in America again.

In February 1942, the U.S. government ordered the roundup of the entire West Coast Japanese American population (approximately 120,000 people) and imprisoned them for two to four years in ten "relocation centers" in California, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and Arkansas. Next to slavery and the near annihilation and confinement of Native American populations on reservations, this policy arguably constituted the worst violation of civil liberties in American history. The government justified this action on the grounds of "military necessity," but it is clear now that its real source was a racism that looked on the Japanese as an unassimilable, untrustworthy, and dangerous "enemy race." In 1990, the U.S. government acknowledged the shamefulness of this policy, formally apologized to Japanese Americans for implementing it, and paid token reparations of $20,000 to each Japanese American who had been interned.

The September 11 attacks naturally drew attention to World War II, the only other war of the last hundred years that involved a devastating attack on American soil. When more than eleven hundred Muslim and Arab immigrants were arrested in the weeks after September 11 and detained indefinitely, some groups on the multicultural left began to articulate fears that this sweep was but the first step of a general Arab or Muslim roundup based on the Japanese internment model. Some individuals on the right have suggested that internment may be necessary if terrorists succeed in another act of terror on American soil.

These invocations of Japanese internment strike me as unfounded. Not only do they ignore the logistical difficulty of incarcerating a Muslim and Arab population that numbers in the millions rather than the hundreds of thousands; but, more important, they fail to note that anti-Japanese prejudice in American society prior to World War II was far more extreme than what Muslim and Arab Americans experienced prior to September 11. Long before December 7, 1941, the U.S. government had barred Japanese nationals from immigrating to America. Those who had come prior to the ban (or who had slipped in after it went into effect) were prohibited from becoming U.S. citizens. For decades, governments in California and other far western states had prohibited Japanese immigrants from owning land. These immigration, naturalization, and land laws expressed the popular view that the Japanese were a dangerous and unassimilable race whose numbers had to be limited and whose access to citizenship and property had to be denied. The scope, duration, and intensity of this anti-Japanese antipathy conditioned most non-Japanese Americans to regard internment as a reasonable, even enlightened, policy. Not many Americans would treat a proposal to intern Muslim and Arab Americans in a similar way today; and although Muslims and Arabs have suffered considerably from prejudice and discrimination, they have not been subjected to decades of legally sanctioned ostracism. I am not suggesting that the internment of a suspect population could never happen in America again; only that we should resist facile comparisons of the Japanese and Muslim and Arab predicaments.

The World War I years offer another example of how America stigmatized and repressed an entire ethnic group during wartime. The victims in this case were the Germans, who, on the eve of war, constituted the largest immigrant group in America—four million strong. When the United States entered the war in 1917, the government undertook a propaganda campaign to turn all Germans into beastly and ruthless "Huns." The

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resulting anti-German hysteria justified the arrests of thousands of immigrants from Germany and Austria-Hungary whom the government suspected of subversion. Congress, meanwhile, began requiring German-language publications to submit all war-related stories to Post Office censors for approval and prohibited the manufacture and distribution of alcohol, at least in part because of the belief that the German American brewers who controlled the beer industry would ply loyal Americans with alcohol and thus weaken their will to fight.

German Americans became the objects of popular hatred. Boston's city government banned performances of Beethoven's symphonies, and the German-born conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra was forced to resign. Americans renamed sauerkraut "liberty cabbage" and hamburgers "liberty sandwiches." Public libraries removed works of German literature from their shelves, and politicians urged school districts to prohibit the teaching of the German language. Some school boards actually burned their districts' German-language books.

German Americans risked being fired from work, losing their businesses, and being assaulted on the street. Even before Prohibition went into effect, German American brewers found it difficult to sell their beer. A St. Louis mob lynched an innocent German immigrant whom they suspected of subversion. After only twenty-five minutes of deliberation, a St. Louis jury acquitted the mob leaders, who had brazenly defended their crime as an act of patriotism. These sorts of experiences devastated the once proud German American community. Its members began hiding their ethnic identity, changing their names, speaking German only in the privacy of their own homes, and celebrating their holidays out of the public eye.

We can discern some parallels between the experience of Arab and Muslim Americans today and German Americans in World War I. Suspicions of Arabs and Muslims mushroomed in the months following September 11, often escalating into overt hostility, discrimination, vandalism, and physical assault. The FBI compiled reports of 481 attacks on people of Middle Eastern descent, Muslims, and Sikhs in 2001, up from 28 the previous year. To that total, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (AAADC) added more than two hundred acts of vandalism against Muslim homes, schools, mosques, and businesses, bringing the number of violent incidents to more than seven hundred. In the weeks after 9/11, at least four individuals were murdered because they looked Middle Eastern. Since September 2001, AAADC has recorded more than eight hundred cases of employment discrimination and more than eighty cases of passengers with perceived Middle Eastern features being removed from planes.

No one, to my knowledge, has counted the number of ethnic and racial slurs directed at Arabs, Muslims, and Sikhs, but it is likely in the tens or even hundreds of thousands. Sikh men, with their distinctive headdress, and Muslim women wearing the hijab, or head covering, have received the heaviest abuse because, to the untrained eyes of non-Muslim Americans, they "look" most like the Islamic enemy. (Many Americans do not know that Sikhs are not Muslims.) Some mosques have reported a decline in attendance because worshippers fear for their safety both in the buildings and on the way there and home. Numerous Muslim women reportedly have put away their headscarves so as not to expose themselves to hate speech when they go out in public. This level of harassment does, in some ways, resemble that experienced by German Americans in World War I.

But in other ways it does not. Most obviously, the federal government, which led the campaign against German Americans in World War I, has not joined the post–9/11 campaign of anti-Muslim calumny. To the contrary, George W. Bush, within days of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, stressed that the United States was waging war on Islamic terrorists, not on Islam, and that Americans must not confuse the two. Bush has reiterated that position many times and, in an effort to demonstrate his commitment to it, has held several high-profile meetings with American Islamic leaders.

There are reasons, of course, to doubt the

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sincerity of Bush's concern for the welfare of American Muslims. His government, after all, has dramatically intensified its surveillance of Muslim and Arab immigrants. Moreover, it may well be that his solicitude toward Islamic America is motivated chiefly by geopolitical concerns, especially the need to keep Muslim countries such as Pakistan aligned with the United States. Nevertheless, his public insistence on the legitimacy of Islam as an American religion has had beneficial effects, particularly in the encouragement it has given private non-Islamic civic and religious groups to express their solidarity with Muslim Americans and to condemn those who would stigmatize Islam as a religion of terror. Universities have felt able in this climate, in ways they did not in World War I (when many abandoned German language and cultural instruction), to expand the number of Islamic scholars on their faculties and to offer more courses on the history and culture of Islam and the Middle East. Many school districts have begun to look for ways to include discussion of Muslims in their diversity curricula. This interest in Islamic history and culture and concern for the rights of Muslim Americans in the United States has been noted by Muslim Americans. The Council on American Islamic Relations reports that since 9/11 almost four out of five Muslims they surveyed "reported acts of kindness by [non-Muslim] friends or colleagues." A New California Media Poll reported by the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California found, meanwhile, that "overwhelming majorities of people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent living in California say they feel their families belong and are welcome" in America.

It is hard to know how much difference the federal government's policy has made overall. Nevertheless, we can easily imagine that had the Bush administration acted differently, and used the opportunity presented by 9/11 to condemn Islam, that the experience of Muslim Americans in the United States these past two years would have been far worse. In this regard the conservative Bush has performed better than the liberal Woodrow Wilson did eighty years ago. As a result, Muslim Americans have not yet faced the kind of thoroughgoing cultural repression undergone by German Americans in World War I.

This could change. Christian rightists took the University of North Carolina to court to prevent the school from requiring incoming freshmen to read parts of the Quran (the rightists lost). The Treasury Department's Operation Green Quest, a project to identify and freeze the assets of those Islamic charitable and educational institutions thought to be linked to radical Islamic groups abroad, could damage the autonomy and vigor of Islamic communal life. And the Department of Justice's arrest of University of South Florida professor Sami al-Arian and seven others on grounds that they are supporting Palestinian terror against Israel could escalate into a campaign against any Arab or Muslim American who expresses support for the Palestinian cause. But until such escalations occur, we should resist equating the situation of Arabs and Muslims today with that of German Americans in World War I.

But Muslim and Arab Americans do face a threat similar to that which Jews, Italians, and other eastern and southern Europeans experienced in the 1920s: a stigmatization milder than what the Germans experienced during World War I, but strong enough to make them targets of discrimination and to render them uncertain about their place in American society.

By 1918, the hatred of German Americans in World War I had grown so intense that it spilled over into suspicion of other ethnic groups who were thought to be too clannish and too attached to their Old World cultures. In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, these suspicions focused most intensely on eastern European Jews and Italians, whose ranks included significant numbers of political radicals. Fear of these groups crystallized in spring 1919, when anarchist terrorist cells launched a mail bomb campaign against wealthy individuals and elected officials who were thought to represent capitalist interests.

As the government failed to identify actual individuals involved in the terrorist acts of 1919, it began to stigmatize all eastern European Jews and Italians as racially inferior, as

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the carriers of inbred ideas and traits that would harm America, and as incapable of acquiring the virtue and democratic habits required of U.S. citizens. In 1921, Congress passed emergency immigration restriction legislation to prevent these now despised groups from coming to America, legislation that became permanent in 1924. The 1924 law, which reduced immigration from eastern and southern Europe from a prewar annual average of 738,000 to only 18,439 (a 97 percent decrease), governed U.S. immigration policy from the 1920s through the 1960s. The anti-immigrant climate of which this policy was part also sanctioned the severity of the government's campaign against Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian anarchists convicted of a 1920 robbery and murder. Despite serious questions about the fairness of the trial and worldwide protests, the government executed both men in 1927.

The government did not augment racist immigration policy with attempts to suppress Jewish or Italian culture; in this sense it was less severe than what the government did to Germans Americans in World War I. But the government's actions did legitimate discrimination against eastern and southern Europeans, who experienced increased difficulty landing choice white- and blue-collar jobs, getting access to restricted residential neighborhoods, and gaining admission to elite private universities.

Arab and Muslim immigrants confront a similar peril today. Although Congress has not banned immigration from Arab or Muslim countries, it has placed that immigration under a surveillance that has grown stronger in the eighteen months since September 11. The surveillance began, as already noted, with the immediate arrest of more than eleven hundred individuals, most of whom were immigrants from Arab or Muslim lands. Several months later, the government asked five thousand men from Middle Eastern and Muslim countries to "volunteer" for interviews with immigration officials. Around the same time, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) ordered public and private universities to provide it with information about their Middle Eastern and Muslim students. In February 2003, the INS began registering and fingerprinting forty-four thousand immigrants from specified Arab and Islamic countries. A federal noose is tightening around Muslim and Arab immigration. The government will soon have the ability to choke it off altogether.

These government actions, which threaten the Bush administration's formal policy of protecting the rights of Arab and Muslim Americans unconnected to terror, have generated considerable fear in the target communities. Stories circulate of immigrants who languish in jail or who are deported for minor visa violations. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of university students from Middle Eastern countries have dropped out of school and gone home. Transnational family networks that depend on a regular circulation of members between their home countries and the United States no longer function effectively. Immigrants from the Middle East and other Islamic countries are finding it much tougher to enter the United States, and many are experiencing far more pressure than they have in the past to behave in "appropriate" ways—to become citizens, to prove their patriotism, and to Americanize their religion and culture. In such circumstances, private discrimination against Muslim and Arab Americans could spread.

Some may argue that this pressure is necessary in this time of war, when terrorists can strike America at any moment. We know that such terrorists are likely to be Muslim, and we also know that some communal organizations within Muslim and Arab America abet terrorism. We need, so the argument goes, to place Muslim/Arab immigrants under surveillance. But if we adhere to this line of argument, we must also recognize the costs of the policies: that the surveillance will not be sufficiently discriminatory in its targets and that many innocent people will suffer its effects; that a substantial population of Muslims and Arabs will feel under siege and that its sense of alienation from the mainstream will deepen; that the range of permissible cultural behavior will narrow and thus damage the openness of American society. At this point, it is hard to know what the ultimate outcome of the choke hold on Muslim and Arab immigration will be; but,

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perhaps, if we come to understand better the excesses of the 1920s policies against Italians and Jews, we will be less likely to repeat them.

In the 1910s and 1920s, the attack first on the Germans and then on Jews and Italians became part of a general crusade against pluralist practices and beliefs in the United States. Prior to World War I, America tolerated a high level of what we today call "multiculturalism." The Germans, in many respects, were the pioneers of this movement, committed to the proposition that they could become American in politics, meaning a loyalty to the American republican system of government, while remaining German in culture. Many immigrant groups shared this belief in practice, if not in name, and the result was an America of extraordinary cultural diversity. The stress on loyalty and conformity in World War I—the campaigns for "100 percent Americanism"—made this diversity impossible to sustain. These were the years when the first multicultural republic died, replaced by a rigid emphasis on Americanization and cultural homogeneity.

Is something similar happening today? Not yet. The concerns about Muslim and Arab Americans have not escalated into a campaign to stop all immigration or to extinguish all cultural difference. It is true that the hard multiculturalism that cohered in the 1970s—one that condemns American nationalism as irredeemably compromised by racism and that upholds an identity grounded in race, ethnicity, or gender as innately superior to it—is in retreat. This rollback began with the "culture wars" of the late 1980s and early 1990s, a series of battles ostensibly won by political conservatives (and culturally conservative liberals) over what kind of American history public schools should teach, what projects the National Endowment for the Arts should fund, and what views of the American past museums should exhibit. However, the vanquished "hard" multiculturalism has not been replaced by campaigns for "100 percent Americanism" in the spirit of World War I, but by a soft multiculturalism, a patriotic version of the pluralist creed that honors the nation and that celebrates racial, ethnic, and sexual diversity as the true meaning of Americanism.

This "soft" multiculturalism is now so well established that even the Republican Party feels compelled to honor its principles. Only a decade ago, Republicans allowed Patrick Buchanan to fulminate from the pulpit of their national convention about the damage that minorities and diversity had done to this country and to the white Christians who formed America's core population. Now African Americans occupy two of the most important positions in the Bush administration, while those Republicans, such as Trent Lott, who continue to speak in the Buchanan way, find themselves, much like Buchanan himself, repudiated by their own party. In this Republican acquiescence to soft multiculturalism we can discern an important victory for the principles of diversity and pluralism.

It would be wrong to conclude from this that most Republicans have undergone a true change of heart on matters of diversity. That the Bush administration immediately followed its dumping of Lott with the nomination of one of Lott's Dixiecrat buddies, Judge Charles W. Pickering, Sr., to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reveals how much the party's older attitudes survive. The newer attitudes are ones that many Republicans have taken on reluctantly, even cynically, and should be interpreted primarily as a measure of soft multiculturalism's prestige.

And none of the consequences of September 11, with the exception of the intensifying surveillance of Muslim Americans and the collapse of a Mexican-U.S. initiative to grant amnesty to illegal Mexicans in the United States, has yet to compromise that prestige. Europeans and other foreigners who have visited America since 9/11 have often remarked to me about the extraordinary cultural vitality and diversity of places like New York City, characteristics that, to their eye, seem undiminished by the destruction of the World Trade Center or by the continuing War on Terror. To them, this vitality and diversity come as something of a shock. Accustomed to drawing news about the United States from anti-American European newspapers or from American television networks that have turned themselves into propaganda arms of the U.S. government, these

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foreign visitors imagine a society given over to militarized patriotism and the repression of dissent. But the story unfolding here is more complicated and hopeful.

As Americans, we continue with our own struggles over diversity, manifest most obviously in the intensifying debate over affirmative action, soon to be the focus of an extraordinarily important Supreme Court ruling. The experience of 9/11 has occasionally brought those struggles into sharper relief, perhaps nowhere more so than in the racial identity of the firemen who perished in New York City on that fateful day. To look at the faces of the several hundred who died, a glance made possible by the *New York Times*'s decision to publish pictures of them all in one of its editions, was to realize that no more than a small number were black or Hispanic. Indeed, of the 343 firemen who died on September 11 only 24 (less than 1 percent) belonged to these minority groups. The phenomenon of a racially segregated fire department in the heart of the world's most diverse city does not seem to have troubled many nonblack or non-Hispanic Americans.

And why should it have, one might ask? For the last decade, Stephen Ambrose, Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks, and Tom Brokaw have fed us one story after another of "The Greatest Generation," its members always represented as warrior bands of white brothers giving their lives so that America would be saved. Ambrose's band of narrators and mythmakers are hardly reactionaries; indeed, the platoons of soldiers they celebrate were, in World War II, at the forefront of breaking down prejudice and divisions between Protestants and Catholics, Jews and Gentiles, northerners and southerners. But the characters in their books and movies, like the men in the platoons whose stories they tell, are always whites of European descent. They are the only ones called upon to save America in the moment of its peril.

World War II images of white warrior heroism are so powerful in our culture today that three white firemen in New York City, amid the chaos of September 11, needed no advance planning to raise a flag on a mound of World Trade Center rubble in the manner done by the Marines on Iwo Jima in 1944. A newspaper photographer caught the act on film, and Spielbergian and Ambrosian America embraced it as an evocative image of September 11 heroism. The New York City Fire Department then chose this photograph as the basis for a memorial sculpture for the fallen firemen, but insisted, in a bow to the realities of New York City politics, that one of the three firemen be cast as black and another as Hispanic. It was absurd to distort the photograph in this way, but equally absurd to make a monument to New Yorkers' sacrifice an all-white affair. In January 2002, the Fire Department quietly abandoned plans to build this sculpture, an admission of how race, more than forty years after the civil rights revolution began, can still paralyze New York City politics. But although the events of September 11, 2001, highlighted this problem, they did not create it or even worsen it. The struggle to desegregate New York City's Fire Department, like many other battles for racial equality, is the metaphorical equivalent of Mao's Long March.

That the struggle for racial equality is still incomplete does, however, draw attention to continuing threats to diversity and pluralism in America. Several dangers lurk. First, one or more groups, such as African Americans or Muslim or Arab Americans, may find their entry into multicultural America blocked. Second, too great a preoccupation with the politics of diversity seems to have distracted us from the reality, growing more alarming by the day, of deepening economic inequality. How else to contrast the popular outcry against Trent Lott's fond memories of segregation with the public's complacent response to the Bush Administration's latest round of proposed tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans? One has to go back to the Gilded Age to find a government so brazen in its determination to serve the interests of the rich and so contemptuous of the poor and middle class. But, unlike the generation of the Gilded Age, too many Americans today seem incapable of summoning up the appropriate outrage.

Finally, how long can domestic multiculturalism flourish when unilateralism shapes America's approach to foreign affairs? A true pluralism, one that celebrates the diversity of cultural practices among Americans, needs an

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international correlate: a respect for the interests of other nations and the cultures of other peoples. This is a belief that the leaders of our government, with few exceptions, do not possess. The Bush administration's and the Republican Party's unilateralism is an expression of what we might call their "uniculturalism," a belief that American culture and the American way of life are superior to all others and ought to dominate the world. It may seem odd that an ostensible respect for diversity within America among Republicans coexists with a uniculturalist approach to world affairs. Indeed, it is an unstable mix. If the Republicans remain secure in their power at home and succeed in their unilateralism abroad, they may well be tempted to launch, in domestic politics, a program of cultural homogenization and coercion. One can easily imagine William Bennett or Lynne Cheney becoming the cultural commissar of a "100 percent Americanism" campaign for the twenty-first century.

As I write the final words of this piece in early March, we are not yet at war with Iraq. But should an American attack occur, especially in circumstances of mass opposition to war in the United States and Europe, pressures for cultural and political conformity may increase dramatically. So, although multiculturalism in America has thus far proved sturdy, its future is not yet assured. ●

GARY GERSTLE teaches history at the University of Maryland and is the author, most recently, of *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century.*

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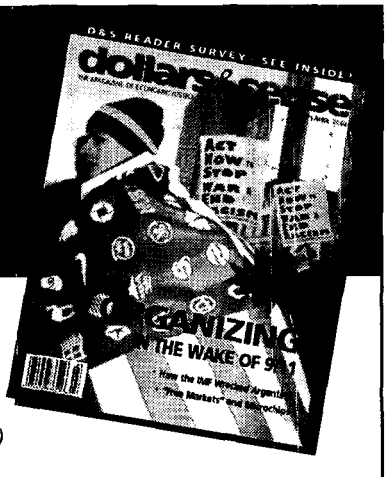

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From Guilt to Solidarity

Sweatshops and Political Responsibility

Iris Young

FOR NEARLY two years we have been living in a crisis mode, with our government suspending due process and spending our tax dollars on war and security instead of health care and environmental protection. The ongoing sense of emergency diverts political discussion and problem solving resources from the more banal harms that were on the public radar screen before we switched into crisis mode and that continue to fester—the lack of affordable housing, violence against women, declining water supplies, or the awful labor conditions in which many workers around the world sweat to produce clothes, shoes, toys, and other everyday goods.

Barely three years ago, a student protest movement swept hundreds of campuses in the United States demanding that university administrations do something about sweatshops. The students called on university administrations to take responsibility for the conditions under which clothing sold in their bookstores and worn by their athletic teams are produced, often by young women, in export processing zones in Asia and Latin America. Other labor and social justice activists leafleted at major retailers, educating consumers and criticizing executive indifference. These activities achieved significant successes in creating better monitoring organizations, for example, and forcing corporate manufacturer's to acknowledge what goes on in factories to which they have subcontracted much of their production. Public debate about sweatshops overseas led to the discovery of sweatshops closer to home—in major American cities.

While there have been some reforms, the basic problem of horrendous labor conditions in a globalized clothing industry, as well as in other industries, remains. Many stalwart activists continue to organize their fellow students and their fellow union or church members, to support union organizing among the most exploited and to mount court action to hold companies liable for labor rights violations. Since the heyday of the campus antisweatshop activity several important books have appeared. In *Behind the Label*, Edna Bonacich and Richard Appelbaum describe the structural underpinnings of sweatshops in Los Angeles and show their connection to others in Asia. Ellen Israel Rosen provides a history of the political economy of the U.S. clothing industry as it has been globalized in her book, *Making Sweatshops*.

The antisweatshop movement has been a consumer and citizens movement as well as a movement of the most affected workers and the labor organizations supporting them. Students on hunger strikes protested university administrations as well as corporate leaders. Leaflets distributed on the street not only criticize big corporate retailers, but also exhort consumers entering stores to pay attention to the conditions of workers in factories far away producing the products they buy, and to join the movement to put pressure on the powerful institutions that can put pressure on the factory owners.

What interests me about the claims these activists make on universities, city governments, and individual consumers is that they are not simply moralistic. They don't claim that these institutions and individuals, who seem so disconnected from the faraway factories, should care about their workers simply because they suffer oppression and injury. The discourse of the antisweatshop movement, as I

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hear it, draws attention to complex structural processes that do connect persons and institutions in very different social and geographic positions. The harm the workers suffer comes most immediately at the hands of factory owners and managers who set hunger level wages and inhumane hours and intimidate anyone who tries to change these conditions. These owners and managers themselves operate, however, in a huge global system that both encourages their practices and constrains their ability to modify those practices—because of a realistic fear of being undercut in a highly competitive environment. The antisweatshop movement argues that all the persons and institutions who participate in the structural processes that produce this constraint should take responsibility for the condition of the workers. We are connected to them; we wear clothes they make; we sell them in our stores. So the movement has done much to de-fetishize commodities, revealing market structures as complex human creations.

Liability vs. Political Responsibility

I think that this claim of responsibility, implicit in the antisweatshop movement, as well as some other contemporary labor and environmental movements, is rather novel. It involves an argument that agents are responsible for injustice by virtue of their structural connection to it, even though they are not to *blame* for it. My main purpose in this essay is to outline the elements of this argument and contrast it with the more familiar concept of responsibility as blame or liability.

The most common model of assigning responsibility derives from legal reasoning about guilt or fault for a harm inflicted. Under the fault model, one assigns responsibility to particular agents whose actions can be shown to be causally connected to the circumstances of the harm. This agent can be a collective entity, such as a corporation, treated as single agent for the purposes of assigning responsibility. The connected actions must be voluntary. If candidates for responsibility can demonstrate that their causal relation to the harm was not voluntary, that they were coerced or that they were in some other way not free, then their responsibility is usually mitigated if not dissolved. When the agents are causally and freely responsible, however, it is appropriate to blame them for the harmful circumstances. A concept of strict liability departs from this model in that it holds individuals liable for an action even if they did not intend the outcome, or holds them liable for a harm caused by someone under their command. While different in these respects, responsibility as fault and strict liability share two other features important for distinguishing them from political responsibility. The fault or liability model is primarily backward looking; it reviews the history of events in order to assign responsibility, usually for the sake of exacting punishment or compensation. Assigning responsibility to some agents, on this model, also has the function of absolving other agents. To find this person or group guilty of a crime usually implies that others accused of the same crime are not guilty.

Assuming that I am right so far, the antisweatshop movement must understand responsibility differently. The universities and consumers it targets are not themselves to blame for the working conditions. They are connected to those conditions only indirectly and in a highly mediated fashion through market relations and other complex structural processes. Although many people would like to say that such a mediated connection implies that they are not responsible at all, the movement argues that institutions, individual consumers, and faraway decision makers in the clothing industry, are responsible in a different sense, which I want to call political responsibility. There are four features of the idea of political responsibility that distinguish it from blame or liability.

1. Political responsibility does not mark out and isolate those who are considered to be responsible. A blame model of responsibility distinguishes those who are responsible from others who, by implication, are not responsible. Such isolation of the one liable or blameworthy person from all the others is an important aspect of legal responsibility, both in criminal and tort law. Because they argue that organizations or collectives, as well as individual persons, can be blamed for harms, most accounts of collective responsibility also aim to distinguish those who have done the

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harm from those who have not.

But many harms, wrongs, and injustices have no isolatable perpetrator; they result from the participation of millions of people and institutions. Endemic large-scale homelessness in an otherwise affluent society, for example, is arguably an injustice without an identifiable perpetrator. Some people and institutions perform specific actions or enforce policies that can be shown as contributing to homelessness, but they do not intend to do that, and what they do only has this effect insofar as it is supplemented and mediated by other actions even further removed from that outcome. For other cases of injustice some specific perpetrators can be identified and blamed as immediate causes, but these too are enabled and supported by wider social structures in which millions of people participate. I have suggested already that the injustices of inhumane labor conditions should be analyzed on these two levels. In the conception of political responsibility, then, finding that some people bear responsibility for injustice does not necessarily absolve others.

2. Political responsibility questions "normal" conditions. In a blame or liability conception of responsibility, what counts as a wrong is generally conceived as a deviation from a baseline. Implicitly, we assume a normal background situation that is morally acceptable, if not ideal. A crime or an actionable harm consists in a morally and legally unacceptable deviation from this background structure. The process that brought about the harm is conceived as a discrete, bounded event that breaks away from the normal flow of events. Punishment, redress, or compensation aims to restore normality or to "make whole" in relation to the baseline condition.

A concept of political responsibility in relation to structural injustices, on the other hand, doesn't focus on harms that deviate from the normal and acceptable, but rather brings into question the "normal" background conditions. When we judge that structural injustice exists, we are saying that at least some of the accepted background conditions of action are morally unacceptable. Most of us contribute to a greater or lesser degree to the production and reproduction of structural injustice precisely because we follow the accepted and expected rules and conventions of the communities in which we live. Usually we enact standard practices in a habitual way, without explicit reflection on what we are doing, having in the foreground of our consciousness and intention our immediate goals and the particular people we need to interact with to achieve them.

The antisweatshop movement well illustrates this challenge to normal structural background conditions. It asks consumers, universities, and other institutions that contract with retailers, brand-name clothing companies, and many other agents, to reflect on the hitherto acceptable market relationships in which they act. It challenges all the agents that are part of the economic chain between the workers who make garments and the people who buy and wear them to ask whether "business as usual" is morally acceptable.

3. Political responsibility looks forward rather than backward. Blame and praise are primarily backward looking judgments. They refer to an action or event assumed to have reached its end. The purpose of assigning responsibility as fault or liability is usually to sanction, punish, or exact compensation. Such backward looking condemnation may partly have a forward looking purpose; we may wish to deter others from similar action in the future or to identify weak points in an institutional system that allows such blameworthy actions, in order to reform the institutions. Once we take this step, however, we may begin to move toward a conception of political responsibility. For many people may be bound to undertake those reforms, even though they are not to blame for past problems.

Political responsibility doesn't reckon debts, but aims at results, and thus depends on the actions of everyone who is in a position to contribute to those results. Taking political responsibility in respect to social structures emphasizes the future more than the past. Because the causal connection of particular individuals or even organizations to the harmful structural outcomes is often impossible to trace, there is no point in seeking to exact compensation or redress from some isolatable perpetrators. If we understand that structural processes cause (some) injustices, then those of

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us who participate in the production and reproduction of the structures should recognize that our actions contribute to the injustice. And then we should take responsibility for changing the processes. To return to the sweatshop case, the main objective of this movement is not to compensate workers for past wrongs but to make social changes that will eliminate future harm. (Such a project cannot be undertaken, of course, without reflection on the past: we need to understand the history of processes that produce specific outcomes, and in this sense must be backward looking.)

4. Political responsibility is shared responsibility. If the injustice is a result of structural processes involving many individuals and institutions engaging in normal and accepted activities, the necessary change requires the cooperation of many of those individuals and institutions. Discharging my responsibility in this situation means joining in collective actions with others. We share responsibility for organizing changes in how the processes work. Working through state institutions is often an effective means to change structural processes, but states are not the only tools of effective action. The antisweatshop movement has begun to create information-sharing and monitoring institutions whose purpose is to connect workers in specific locales to solidarity organizations far away who try to hold manufacturers to account for working conditions. Our responsibility is political in the sense that acting on it involves joining in a public discourse where we try to persuade one another about courses of collective action that will contribute to social change.

An important corollary of this feature of political responsibility is that many of those properly thought to be victims of harm or injustice may nevertheless have political responsibilities in relation to it. In a fault model of responsibility, blaming the victims of injustice serves to absolve others of responsibility for their plight. In a conception of political responsibility, however, those who can properly be called victims of structural injustice often share the responsibility to try to change the structures. In the case of labor exploitation, the workers themselves ought to resist if they can.

Conceptualizing political responsibility as distinct from blame is important for motivating political action. When people feel that they are being blamed, they tend to react defensively. They look for other agents to blame instead, or they make excuses that mitigate their liability. Such practices of accusation and defense have an important place in morality and law. When the issue is how to mobilize collectives for the sake of social change, however, such rhetorics of blame and finger-pointing lead more to resentment and refusal to take responsibility than to useful action. If corporate executives or ordinary people buying shoes believe that antisweatshop activists are blaming them for the conditions under which the shoes are produced, they rightly become indignant, or scoff at what they perceive as the extremism of the movement. Distinguishing political responsibility from blame or liability allows us to urge one another to take responsibility together for the fact that our actions collectively contribute to the complex structural processes that produce the working conditions we deplore. Most of us have not committed individual wrongs; rather, we participate by our normal and on the face of it innocuous actions in processes that produce wrongs.

Degrees and Kind of Responsibility

In principle, all who participate by their actions in the structural processes that produce unjust outcomes share responsibility for working to alter those processes. So stated, however, this idea of responsibility may sound both overwhelming and unfair—overwhelming because most of us participate in many such processes, and unfair because some people would seem to be in a position to influence them more than others. A further step in thinking about political responsibility, then, involves distinguishing kinds and degrees. I suggest that we should think about action in relation to structural injustice along parameters of connection, power, and privilege.

Connection—The concept of political responsibility holds that agents have forward looking responsibilities to take action to remedy structural injustices—not just because all right thinking people should be concerned about suffering wherever it occurs, but on the more specific grounds that we are connected

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by our own actions to the structural processes that produce injustice. One means of deciding which responsibilities are mine, then, is by understanding particular connections between my actions and distant others. Consumer movements are often significant in this respect because, as I've said, they demystify processes of production and distribution. However mediated the connection between my life and activities and those of the people who produce the things I buy, it is difficult to deny that there is a connection. The antisweatshop movement has had some success in reducing the anonymity of market processes by demanding that universities and other bulk consumers, as well as large retailers, identify the sites where particular items are manufactured. Such demands challenge the assumption that market exchange processes are or ought to be untraceable, and so they have had some effect in improving tracking systems and accountability.

Recognizing the power of connection in establishing responsibility, some people decide that the way to exercise this responsibility is to disconnect. They choose not to buy certain products or brands, which they have reason to think are manufactured under unjust conditions. But when such a boycott is the act of a single individual, it has no effect on those conditions. And it is nearly impossible in the contemporary world for a person to remove herself from any implication in structures that produce injustice. To the extent that this implication is a ground of political responsibility, then, the responsibility cannot be escaped by withdrawal; it has to be taken up. Organized boycotts, on the other hand, can be one effective means of exercising political responsibility.

Power—A person's position in structural processes usually carries different degrees of potential or actual influence over the processes. Organizations and institutions, moreover, vary in their ability to influence structural processes. Some of the large major clothing retailers, for example, such as Bennetton, The Gap, or Guess?, have built transnational systems not only of retail outlets, but also of small manufacturers with whom they contract. Because of the size, reach, and relative influence of such organizations, it makes sense to expect major decision makers in them to take responsibility for working conditions in factories they neither own nor directly operate. The antisweatshop movement recognizes this criterion by targeting corporate or regulatory bodies that arguably have the power to change structural processes. The power and influence parameter suggests that where individuals and organizations do not have sufficient energy and resources to respond to all the structural injustices to which they are connected, they should focus on those where they have the greatest influence. Powerful institutions, of course, often have more interest in perpetuating the status quo than in changing established structures and the outcomes they produce. For this reason individuals and organizations with relatively less power, but some ability to influence the powerful, must take responsibility to do that.

Privilege—Where there are structural injustices, these usually produce not only victims of injustice but also privileged beneficiaries. Persons who benefit from structural inequalities have a special moral responsibility to join in correcting them—not because they are to blame, but because they are able to adapt to changed circumstances without suffering serious deprivation.

It doesn't follow from this point—that privilege generates special responsibilities—that victims of injustice do not share responsibility to try to change the conditions that constrain their options. On the contrary. I pointed out earlier that one difference between a liability model and a political model of responsibility is that those who suffer injustice share political responsibility. Thus in the sweatshop case, the specific position of the workers carries with it specific responsibilities. Their conditions are likely to improve only if they organize to demand and monitor the improvements. Victims of injustice, however, can only succeed in their own efforts if others in a position to support them take responsibility to do so.

Implications of the Idea

The claims of the antisweatshop movement, I have suggested, are best understood under a model of political responsibility. One of the things particularly interesting about this movement is that it raises transnational and global

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questions about who should act for change. The movement challenges the widely held idea that people and institutions should be held more responsible for what takes place inside their own country than for what takes place outside, that our responsibilities are necessarily greater for close-by effects of our actions than for those that are diffuse and remote. But many structural processes do not recognize national boundaries, and they often produce more widespread and long-term harms than do particular actions or policies. The basis of political responsibility lies not in membership in a political community governed by a common set of laws and regulatory institutions, but rather in social and economic connection. Laws and regulatory institutions are less a basis for political responsibility than a means of discharging it. Where it can be argued that a group shares responsibility for structural processes that produce injustice, but institutions for regulating those processes don't exist, we ought to try to create new institutions. ●

IRIS YOUNG teaches political philosophy at the University of Chicago. She occasionally stands with others handing out flyers in front of the Disney Store on Michigan Avenue.

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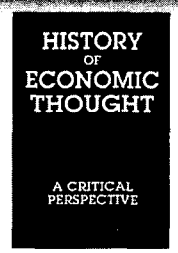

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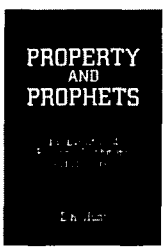

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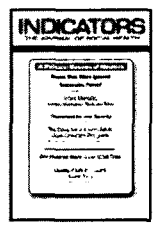

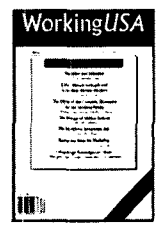

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Offshore Banking: The Secret Threat to America

Lucy Komisar

In November 1932, deputy Fabien Albertin took the floor of the National Assembly in Paris to denounce tax evasion by eminent French personalities—politicians, judges, industrialists, church dignitaries, and directors of newspapers—who were hiding their money in Switzerland.

"The minister of finance knows very well that for ten years, the concern of all his predecessors has been to track down this fraud . . ." he declared. "However, till now, the information one has gotten has been extremely vague. When documents arrive, they are formless notebooks in which holders of accounts are represented only as numbers. Employees of the banks don't know the names of account holders. These names are known only to the director of the bank, who the clients forbid to correspond with them, so anxious are they to preserve anonymity."

He said, "If one reads the Swiss newspapers this morning, one sees that public opinion in Switzerland dreads the massive shrinking of sums that have been deposited in its banks—of which it enjoys exclusive profit."

There had been a raid on a building on the rue de la Trémoille in the aristocratic district of the Champs-Élysées, where officials of a Swiss bank had a five-room apartment. Police had passed through a crowd of impatient clients in the waiting room, entered the office, and seized all available documents.

Albertin argued that the operation should have occurred earlier, as the business had gone on without interruption for ten days. Even so, the police collected 245,000 French francs, 2,000 Swiss francs, and even more important, an index, a cashbook, a file, and ten large notebooks with two thousand names.

A parliamentarian shouted, "We want to know them!"

Albertin answered, "The minister knows . . ."

But the finance minister declared, "Ah! No! Mr. Albertin, I don't know this list at all."

And Albertin replied, "I am going to satisfy your curiosity. Some will say, 'Ah! You socialists are happy to dishonor political adversaries and show that there are classes in society!' Yes, there are classes. And in this scandal, the ruling elite of society shows its selfishness and unwillingness to obey French law!"

His list included deputies, senators, and judges, whose role, he pointed out, was to make and apply the laws. He called them men of "a particularly ticklish patriotism" who, he noted with irony, "probably are unaware that the money they deposit abroad is lent by Switzerland to Germany." That Switzerland was Hitler's banker was already known. Albertin noted sardonically that such people never made loans to the French defense effort. He added that the list included a dozen generals, even the comptroller of the army.

He began to name the names of the tax evader elite, including two bishops, who he said, "though the kingdom isn't of this world," were able to reconcile their oaths of poverty with the desire to shelter their fortunes. There were also manufacturers of automobiles and furniture.

"Names!" cried a deputy.

"The Peugeot brothers," Albertin replied. The furniture maker was Lévitan.

He moved on to Henriette François Coty, of the famous perfume family, who ran a newspaper, *L'Ami du people* (*Friend of the People*), and a M. Sapètre, whom Albertin took for the publisher of *Le Matin* (*Morning*). Albertin declared, "There is nothing more painful, saddening, and tragic, nothing that can discourage the mass of French workers more deeply than to see every day the men who direct and inspire

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French opinion in the columns of their big dailies call for the nation's financial patriotism, tell of sacrifices to be asked of civil servants and war victims . . . and on their own part, cheat."

Swiss bankers were stunned by the revelations of their clients' names. They feared that unless they could block future exposure, they might lose the deposits people had stashed with them to avoid paying their own countries' taxes. To make sure that account owners' names could never be made public again, in 1934, the Swiss Confederation made it a crime for a bank employee to violate the secrecy of clients' identities. Bank secrecy was born; even law enforcement on the track of thieves could not pierce it. The elites of France and elsewhere could rest easy. Taxes would burden only the poor and middle classes.

WHEN I READ that story, I realized I had solved a mystery that had perplexed me for years. As a journalist, I hadn't initially worked at trying to figure out financial puzzles. A child of the sixties—of the civil rights and then the feminist movements—I'd focused on the plight of the third world, which was, it seemed, condemned to poverty and dictators. Beginning in the 1980s, when I visited places such as Haiti, the Philippines, and Zaire, I was struck by the fact that local opponents of the dictators invariably told me that the plundered loot was in Switzerland. Switzerland? The country of the International Red Cross, of chocolate and cuckoo clocks and good deportment, often held up as a model for developing countries?

It was also the Switzerland of banks—banks run by men who mixed with the best of company and, by the way, were accessories to the theft and laundering of billions of dollars stolen from people in every country of the world—the repository of booty amassed by tyrants from Hitler to Mobutu. I vowed to find out how the system operated, who supported it, how it could continue in the face of clear evidence that it facilitated criminal acts and caused appalling suffering.

I discovered that in the decades that followed Albertin's protest at the National Assembly, dozens of countries in search of foreign capital had copied the system. Bank secrecy became a vital financial service—for drug traffickers beginning in the 1960s, and then for other criminal syndicates from the 1980s, for dictators and corrupt politicians looting their countries, for business fraudsters, for bribe-givers and takers, for arms and people traffickers, for evaders of court judgments, and of course for tax cheats. It was a system that operated only half in the shadows. People made jokes about Swiss bank accounts. The writers of thrillers sent their heroes and villains to Grand Cayman. "Money laundering" was a phrase that everyone knew, even if they didn't quite know its significance.

Then, in the 1990s, Swiss bankers came under attack from the victims of the Nazis and their heirs, who complained that the accounts generously hidden by Swiss bankers had been not-so-generously appropriated by them. Officials of the United States and Western Europe complained that the Swiss were holding the money of drug traffickers and tax cheats and refusing to give information to law enforcement agencies. Governments of developing countries complained that the Swiss had concealed the money stolen by their former dictators and refused to give it back. In 2001, the United States learned that the Swiss had protected the bank that handled finances for Osama bin Laden.

In each case, the money was shielded by the bank secrecy that the Swiss invented after Albertin embarrassed their corrupt clients. In each case, those bankers were accessories to crime. But now Americans and others throughout the world recognized that this sub-rosa system was a threat to their security. And the people whose ill-gotten profits were at stake organized to protect the system, in the United States and internationally.

Bank secrecy has been a hidden issue—buried in plain sight as key political leaders, major media, and even citizen groups ignored glaring lessons: in the 1980s, the collapse of the Vatican-linked Ambrosiano Bank and the illegal sale of arms to Iran and diversion of funds to the Contras; in the 1990s, the Bank of Credit and Commercial International (BCCI) swindle; and for decades, the burgeoning international narcotics and illicit arms

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trades—all dependent on secret bank accounts. U. S. political leaders, with a few exceptions, were loath to challenge big banks and brokerages that wanted no barriers to the influx of customers' funds. The same was true abroad.

When U.S. bank regulators wanted to strengthen existing rules to detect illicit funds, the banks resorted to scare tactics. In 1999, to sink a "know your customer" regulation proposed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, they orchestrated a successful e-mail campaign to Congress. Constituents protested that the regulation compromised their right to keep their accounts free from government surveillance. That was a fiction; U.S. law enforcement agents with court orders could already see any bank records they wanted. Other government officials could not. The regulation set guidelines to help banks carry out the existing requirement of "due diligence," that is, that they make sure that their customers were who they said they were and that banks report suspicious transactions.

The rules were aimed at people and companies moving very large sums through accounts—millions of dollars, not thousands. It aimed to make life more difficult for people who supplied phony identities or companies that lied about true owners. One official suggested it should have been called "know your criminal." In the face of 225,000 e-mail messages and letters and the opposition of the banks, the rule was withdrawn.

The ordinary citizens who sent those message probably had no idea what is meant by real bank secrecy—the kind that exists in Switzerland and other tax havens, that prevents anyone, even law enforcement agents, from finding out the owners or seeing the records of an account. In some countries, anyone who releases owner information can be jailed. Sometimes accounts are numbered or coded (the famous "numbered Swiss bank accounts"), and only key officials of the bank know the beneficiaries. Or the accounts are opened in the names of lawyers or accountants, so even bank officials don't know.

Is a Colombia drug cartel buying Chicago real estate? Is a Muslim terrorist group acquiring a flight training school? If the money went through Grand Cayman, law enforcement officials won't know. The procedures for finding out drag on for months and years, by which time the account is closed, all traces erased.

There was one weak link in the secrecy system. In countries such as the United States, banks were supposed to obtain stated reasons for direct transfers of large amounts of money. That might mean a claim for sale or purchase of stocks, merchandise, or real estate, or the receipt or repayment of a loan. If true names were attached to the companies involved in transactions, they might be traced. Or fraudulent activities undertaken in a company's name might lead investigators to follow its trail.

So, CORPORATE secrecy was invented. Shell companies—front companies, "mailbox" companies, sometimes called International Business Corporations (IBCs) or Personal Investment Companies (PICs)—were set up to own bank accounts and effect phony transactions to hide or launder funds. They didn't produce goods or services; they existed for bookkeeping, to receive, hold, and transfer money so as to hide the real people involved. Banks and accounting firms marketed shell and even ready-made "off-the-shelf companies," the latter already registered with local governments, picked up by clients like merchandise in a store.

Offshore networks popularly come in series of three. It's called layering, or laddering. "Throw in Cayman and Panama; sprinkle with Aruba or Curacao," says the Miami official of an international investigation firm that hunts fraudsters. Money launderers set up a British Virgin Islands corporation, open a bank account in Curacao, airfreight the money to Aruba, have it wire transferred. In days, it's been through three jurisdictions, and there are no records. You can convert profits to losses, put money in phony loans, buy businesses without people knowing who you are, and evade all laws regulating money. If authorities looking into a loan to the company want to find out who owns it, lawyers say, "That's protected by secrecy law." Sometimes, for greater obfuscation a shell company is owned by another shell from a second jurisdiction. At the end, there is "integration": the individual buys a big

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hotel or invests in the stock market.

Many offshore centers offer another advantage to customers. They levy low or no taxes on owners of investment funds or registered companies. Of course, they don't apply such rules to themselves, only to nonresidents and companies not doing business in their countries.

There are some fifty-five offshore zones—legendary Switzerland, Grand Cayman, and colorful islands such as Nauru in the South Pacific. The world's second-largest tax haven just behind the Cayman Islands, Nauru has ten thousand residents and four hundred offshore banks—all registered at a single mailbox. The Caribbean also has the money laundries of Antigua, Aruba, and the British Virgin Islands. European favorites include Luxembourg, Austria, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Cyprus, and the British Channel Islands—with strong links to London. Dubai and Israel are important in the Middle East.

The money involved is monumental. Secrecy havens have 1.2 percent of the world's population and hold 26 percent of the world's wealth, including 31 percent of the net profits of U.S. multinationals. According to Merrill Lynch & Gemini Consulting's "World Wealth Report" for 2000, one third of the wealth of the world's "high net-worth individuals" (as banks like to call them), nearly $6 trillion out of $17.5 trillion, may now be held offshore. Some $3 trillion is in deposits in tax haven banks and the rest is in securities held by IBCs and trusts.

Experts believe that as much as half the world's capital flows through offshore centers. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) says that between $600 billion and $1.5 trillion of illicit money is laundered annually, equal to 2 percent to 5 percent of global economic output. These offshore centers awash in money are the hub of a colossal, underground network of crime, fraud, and corruption.

In America, the system made a big hit with the gangsters of Chicago. After Al Capone was convicted of tax evasion in 1931, organized crime groups realized they had to hide or launder their money so they could show legal origins and pay taxes. In 1932, mobster Meyer Lansky took money from New Orleans slot machines and shifted it to accounts overseas. The Swiss secrecy law two years later assured him of G-man-proof banking. Later, he bought a Swiss bank and for years deposited his Havana casino take in Miami accounts, then wired the funds to Switzerland via a network of shell and holding companies and offshore accounts, some of them in banks whose officials knew very well they were working for criminals. By the 1950s, Lansky was using the system for cash from the heroin trade.

Today, offshore is where most of the world's drug money is laundered, estimated at up to $500 billion a year, more than the total income of the world's poorest 20 percent. Add the proceeds of tax evasion and the figure skyrockets to $1 trillion. Another few hundred billion come from fraud and corruption.

Lansky laundered money so he could pay taxes and legitimate his spoils. About half the users of offshore have opposite goals. As hotel owner and tax cheat Leona Helmsley intoned before she went to jail, "Only poor people pay taxes." Rich individuals and corporations avoid taxes through complex, accountant-aided schemes that routinely use offshore accounts and companies to hide income and manufacture deductions. The impact is massive. The IRS estimates that taxpayers fail to pay in excess of $100 billion in taxes annually due on income from legal sources. The General Accounting Office says that American wage-earners report 97 percent of their wages, while self-employed persons report just 11 percent of theirs. Each year between 1989 and 1995, a majority of corporations, both foreign- and U.S.-controlled, paid no U.S. income tax. European governments are fighting the same problem. The situation is even worse in developing countries.

The issue surfaces in the press when an accounting scam is so outrageous that it strains credulity. Take the case of Stanley Works, which announced a "move" of its headquarters—on paper—from New Britain, Connecticut, to Bermuda and of its imaginary management to Barbados. Though its building and staff would actually stay put, manufacturing hammers and wrenches, Stanley Works would no longer pay taxes on profits from international trade. The

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Securities and Exchange Commission, run by Harvey Pitt—an attorney who for more than twenty years represented the top accounting and Wall Street firms he was regulating—accepted the pretense as legal.

"The whole business is a sham," fumed New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, who more than any other U.S. law enforcer has attacked the offshore system. "The headquarters will be in a country where that company is not permitted to do business. They're saying a company is managed in Barbados when there's one meeting there a year. In the prospectus, they say legally controlled and managed in Barbados. If they took out the word legally, it would be a fraud. But Barbadian law says it's legal, so it's legal." The conceit apparently also persuaded the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Stanley Works's accountants, the global firm Ernst & Young, and its lawyers, the prominent Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom, presumably advised their client that this was a good way to keep from paying $30 million in U.S. taxes. But it turns out that Stanley was planning to save on more than the taxes on business done outside the United States. Even though it only paid $7 million in U.S. tax on foreign income in 2001, Stanley indicated that the move would save it at least $25 million in 2002. The immediate effect would be to increase the salaries of Stanley executives, who were already being paid millions; American taxpayers would make up the loss.

That scam hit the headlines, and in the face of a threatened lawsuit by the attorney general of Connecticut, Stanley Works backed down. The AFL-CIO and unions such as UNITE and AFSCME are using pension stock votes to try to bring runaway companies back onshore. They say the moves deprive the United States of taxes and also reduce shareholders' control, including the right to examine books or sue management.

But Stanley Works's ploy is only one of myriad ways companies use the offshore system to cheat on taxes. Companies in international trade routinely use shell accounts. According to a Miami private investigator, "If I have a Colombian company that imports Mercedes trucks from Germany, the company ordering the trucks will be registered in the British Virgin Islands or Curacao; no Colombian firm will handle invoices; Colombian tax authorities won't know how much business they're doing."

These practices are endemic in third world countries. Oxfam International calculates the money sucked out of developing countries and deposited in tax havens at $50 billion a year, nearly the size of the $57 billion annual global aid budget, six times the annual cost of achieving universal primary education, and almost three times the cost of universal primary health care. Oxfam figures that $35 billion of the missing money is taxes evaded by foreign corporations, often through "transfer pricing"—buying and selling through tax haven shell companies to hide profits. When I was in Moscow, an employee for a major American company told me how its auto rental subsidiary booked its Moscow cars to clients via an offshore office so it could cheat on reporting income in Russia.

Some of the money is stolen outright. World Bank-financed roads in Indonesia cost an extra 30 percent to account for corruption. That's loan money Indonesian citizens must repay. Developing countries owe more than $2 trillion to rich nations and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF.

THE DIRTY LITTLE secret of third world debt is that a substantial part of the money given for political reasons to pro-Western dictators was laundered in offshore centers and funneled back to Western stock markets and real estate. It's estimated that for every dollar the West "gives," or more likely, lends the third world, ten dollars in dirty money funnels back to it. This drains hard currency reserves needed to buy imports, takes away funds for investment, and beggars education and health programs.

At the Africa-Europe summit in Cairo in 2000, when the Europeans accused the Africans of corruption, the Africans riposted, "You're the ones that take the funds; give us our money back!" European banks have fought attempts to retrieve the money stashed by dictators.

Attempts to find laundered funds are usu-

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ally dismal failures. According to Interpol, $3 billion in dirty money has been seized in twenty years of struggle against money laundering—about the amount laundered in three days. U.S. Treasury officials say 99.9 percent of the foreign criminal and terrorist money presented for deposit in the United States gets into secure accounts. That means anti–money-laundering efforts fail 99.9 percent of the time.

Bank secrecy is not about preventing your neighbor or a government official from casually inquiring about your account balance or to whom you wrote your last check. It means that a prosecutor or plaintiff with a court order can't see the financial records of someone who has just walked off with the company funds, or failed to pay child support, or has been caught divvying a kilo of heroin to a teenage sales force or running a scam that wiped out thousands of people's savings, or paid no taxes while flying around in a private jet.

It means Osama bin Laden can move money through a financial network centered around the Al Taqwa ("Fear of God") bank, registered in the offshore haven of the Bahamas and operated from the secrecy jurisdiction of Switzerland.

Corporate secrecy is what let Enron set up 780 shell companies in Grand Cayman and another eighty in the Turks & Caicos islands to hide insider trading, stage-manage financial records, deceive investors and creditors, and avoid U.S. taxes. The offshore system let Arthur Andersen do its "creative accounting," manipulating its client's books with handy secret companies and accounts.

These beneficiaries want to keep the system. So do the big banks, which make substantial commissions on their offshore services. Offshore is not a fly-by-night operation run by unknown shady dealers. It is a blue chip industry operated by multi-billion dollar international banks and major investment, law, and accountancy firms.

International banks have special private banking departments to help big-money clients establish offshore networks to hide their money. The worldwide total for assets managed by private banks is an estimated $15.5 trillion. Private banking profits are over 20 percent, twice as high as in many other departments. Another dirty little secret (known to all but the general public) is that private banking exists largely to manage money clients are hiding from their own countries' tax collectors. The banks' advertisements make that clear when they promote their "discretion"—a code word for secrecy. Brokerages benefit when hot money fuels the stock markets. Some $300 billion to $500 billion of "dirty money" enters the international capital markets every year.

Joseph Stiglitz, the 2001 Nobel laureate for economics, told me, "You ask why, if there's an important role for a regulated banking system, do you allow a non-regulated banking system to continue? It's in the interests of some of the moneyed interests to allow this to occur. It's not an accident; it could have been shut down at any time. If you said the U.S., the UK, the major G-7 banks will not deal with offshore bank centers that don't comply with G-7 bank regulations, these banks could not exist. They only exist because they can engage in transactions with standard banks." The G-7 are the top industrialized countries.

Why is it now becoming an issue? Some American political leaders have been pushing to reform the offshore system for years. Democratic Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, who ran the Iran-Contra and BCCI hearings in the 1980s and 1990s, called for changes then: he even wrote a book about it. Republican member of Congress Jim Leach of Iowa, head of the House Banking Committee in the late 1990s, held hearings on money laundering by Citibank and pressed for legislation. Democratic senator Carl Levin of Michigan ran hearings and oversaw reports on offshore banking and also wrote reform bills. Congress and succeeding Republican and Democratic administrations weren't interested.

Meanwhile, during the 1990s, American anti-narcotics officials began focusing on the offshore connection. And European countries became worried about huge tax losses. With advances in technology, not just the enormously wealthy but even the moderately rich could set up secret offshore companies and accounts. They didn't have to travel to tax havens; they could bank by fax or e-mail. An

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Internet search using "offshore" or "tax haven" turns up dozens of hits. So do the pages of the *Economist*, airline magazines, and publications for the "moderately" rich.

When I first started writing on the subject in 1997, most people I spoke to needed an explanation of "offshore." An assistant opinion-page editor of a major American newspaper asked me, "Just what is a numbered Swiss bank account?"—and then decided the issue was too arcane and complex to present to readers, especially since she didn't understand it herself. The editor of a major foreign policy organization's journal asked for an article, then panicked when it turned out to be a call for the end of bank secrecy. Lacking the courage to air a challenge to the status quo (his organization's banker and broker members), or even to confront the author, he turned it down through his secretary. No wonder the American public does not understand this issue. The mainstream media refuse to confront it.

It took the discovery that Osama bin Laden used a financial network based offshore and that Enron set up affiliates in secrecy havens to make U.S. political leaders, editors, and the public begin to pay serious attention. Now, the banks are working on damage control, trying to limit the scope of domestic legislation and international agreements. In Europe, citizens groups seeking global economic reform call offshore secrecy pernicious and want to end it. In America, however, there's no lobby to challenge the banks. And on neither side of the Atlantic are governments seeking radical reforms. Who are the "moneyed interests" who keep in place the international financial services system for criminals? One might, with the French deputies seventy years ago, cry, "names!"

Today, the names include the corporate and wealthy interests represented by the Bush administration. Paul O'Neill, then treasury secretary, announced at the February 2001 meeting of the G-7 that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—which had developed an initiative to stop tax havens from hiding the money of tax cheats—shouldn't be "dictating to any country . . . the appropriate level of tax rates." In May, he announced that the OECD demands were "too broad" and withdrew U.S. support. The OECD softened its demands. An OECD team was investigating how to reform the shell company system. It has made no public proposals. Now, key Republican officials are attempting to block a Clinton-era IRS regulation to collect information on interest paid to nonresident aliens so this can be shared with other countries—especially the European Union, which has developed its own tax-information sharing policy to catch money in flight to Luxembourg, Austria, Switzerland, and elsewhere.

I spoke about the Bush policy at a seminar run by the new European Network Against Tax Havens and Tax Evasion at the World Social Summit in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January. No representatives of U.S. groups attended; alas, this issue is not yet on the agenda of the American left. ●

LUCY KOMISAR, a New York-based journalist whose articles on international affairs have appeared in major U.S. and foreign publications, is writing a book about the offshore bank and corporate secrecy system.

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Citizenship and Disability

Michael Bérubé

In the six years since I published a book about my son Jamie, *Life As We Know It*, a great deal has changed in Jamie's life—starting with his realization that there is a book about him. When I completed the book Jamie was only four, and had not yet entered the public K-12 system. But I did not stop serving as Jamie's recorder and public representative when I finished that book: I still represent him all the time, to school officials, camp counselors, babysitters and friends, to academic audiences, and to Down Syndrome Associations. I take it as one of my tasks to watch for important things he's never done before, as a way of charting and understanding the irreplaceable and irreducible little person he is, especially as he gets less and less little, and more and more capable of representing himself.

Jamie is now in his sixth year of school, having entered kindergarten in 1997-1998. In the intervening years he has not continued to perform at grade level (he is repeating fourth grade, at age eleven), and he has occasionally presented his schoolmates with some eccentric behavior. On the other hand, he has learned to read, to do two- and three-digit addition and subtraction, to multiply two-digit numbers, and most recently to do division by single numbers, with and without remainders. My wife, Janet, and I did not teach him these things, but the minute it became clear that he could do them in school, we picked up the ball and ran with it. We've tried to make every available use of his startlingly prodigious memory, and we've learned that when he tells us that such and such bird is not a parrot but is instead a scarlet macaw, he's usually right. He has some idiosyncrasies that do not serve him well in school or in testing situations: at one point he memorized the numbers on the wrong side of his flash cards, the serial numbers that indicate each card's place in the deck. He likes to pretend that he does not know left from right, referring instead (with perverse delight) to his "left foot" and his "other foot." He is a stubborn ignatz, as people find whenever they try to get him to do something he has no interest in, or whenever his teachers or aides try to make him move from one task to another. For a while he tried to put off unpleasant tasks by telling his teachers or therapists, "Let's do that tomorrow"; before long he realized that this didn't work, and began saying instead, "We did that yesterday"—a ruse with which he has had some success.

His conversational skills are steadily improving, but unless you're talking to him about one of the movies he's seen or one of the routines he's developed at school or at home, you'll find that his sense of the world is sometimes unintelligible, sometimes merely a bit awry. He recently received an invitation to a classmate's birthday party (his third such invitation since we moved to central Pennsylvania sixteen months ago: we count and cherish each one), and Janet asked him what the birthday boy looked like: "he's a small boy," said Jamie, holding his hand around his shoulder level.

"What color is his hair?" she asked.

"Black," Jamie replied.

"What color are his eyes?"

"Blue."

"Does he wear glasses?" (Jamie has worn glasses for about five years.)

"No," Jamie said, "just eyes."

But then, Janet and I did not expect him to be able to describe his classmates at all. Nor did we expect him to be so talented a mimic; he can imitate both of us, just as he can imitate break dancers and gymnasts and snakes and lemurs. We did not expect him to be able to do multiplication or division; we did not ex-

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pect him to open books and ask us to "read and tell all the things"; we did not expect him to be able to ask us "why" questions, as when he asked me why I could not leave him alone in a hotel room while I went to park the car. We did not expect him to win a spelling award in second grade for maintaining an average above 90 on his spelling tests for the year. We did not expect him to be designated by his classmates in third grade as the kid with the best sense of humor.

Over eleven years, then, we've come to expect that Jamie will defeat or exceed our expectations when we least expect him to. And from this I draw two points. One, he's a child. Two, and this is a somewhat more elaborate conclusion, although it can be derived from point one: it might be a good idea for all of us to treat other humans as if we do not know their potential, as if they just might in fact surprise us, as if they might defeat or exceed our expectations. It might be a good idea for us to check the history of the past two centuries whenever we think we know what "normal" human standards of behavior and achievement might be. And it might be a very good idea for us to expand the possibilities of democracy precisely because democracy offers us unfinished and infinitely revisable forms of political organization that stand the best chance, in the long run, of responding adequately to the human rights of the unpredictable creatures we humans are. That might be one way of recognizing and respecting something you might want to call our human dignity.

JAMIE IS, of course, one reason why I am drawn to the question of disability rights and their relation to democracy: every morning I take him to school, I know how very fortunate he is to be living under a social dispensation that entitles him to a public education alongside his nondisabled peers. But beyond my immediate interest in forwarding Jamie's interests, I want to argue that disability issues are—or should be—central to theories of social justice in a much broader sense. Nancy Fraser's account of the "politics of recognition" and the "politics of redistribution" (*Adding Insult to Injury: Social Justice and the Politics of Recognition*), for example, offers a theory that tries to accommodate what were the two major strands of American progressive-left thought in the 1990s, multiculturalism and democratic socialism (in all their varieties)—or what Richard Rorty, in *Achieving Our Country*, termed the "cultural left" and the "reformist left," the former concerned primarily with combating social stigma and the latter concerned primarily with combating greed. Fraser has shown convincingly that the politics of recognition and redistribution offer a productive way to think about feminism: cultural politics with regard to body images or sexual harassment, for example, are not to be understood as distractions from "real" politics that address comparative worth or the minimum wage. Rather, recognition politics have consequences for the redistribution of social goods and resources even though they cannot be reduced to their redistributive effects. And since many left intellectuals in the 1990s were all too willing to think of politics as a zero-sum game in which any attention paid to multiculturalism had to come at the expense of democratic socialism and vice versa, Fraser's work seems to offer a way for the left to champion a progressive tax code and an end to racial profiling at the same time.

It is striking, nonetheless, that so few leftists have understood disability in these terms. Disability is not the only area of social life in which the politics of recognition are inseparable from the politics of redistribution; other matters central to citizenship, such as immigration, reproductive rights, and criminal justice, are every bit as complex. Nonetheless, our society's representations of disability are intricately tied to, and sometimes the very basis for, our public policies for "administering" disability. And when we contemplate, in these terms, the history of people with cognitive and developmental disabilities, we find a history in which "representation" takes on a double valence: first, in that people who were deemed incapable of representing themselves were therefore represented by a socio-medical apparatus that defined—or, in a social-constructionist sense, created—the category of "feeblemindedness"; and second, in the sense that the visual and rhetorical representations of "feebleminded" persons then set the terms for public

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policy. One cannot plausibly narrate a comprehensive history of ideas and practices of national citizenship in the post–Civil War United States without examining public policy regarding disability, especially mental disability, all the more especially when mental disability was then mapped onto certain immigrant populations who scored poorly on intelligence tests and were thereby pseudo-scientifically linked to criminality. And what of reproductive rights? By 1927, the spurious but powerful linkages among disability, immigration, poverty, and criminality provided the Supreme Court with sufficient justification for declaring involuntary sterilization legal under the Constitution.

THERE IS AN obvious reason why disability rights are so rarely thought of in terms of civil rights: disability was not covered in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And as Anita Silvers points out, over the next twenty-five years, groups covered by civil rights law sometimes saw disability rights as a dilution of civil rights, on the grounds that people with disabilities were constitutively incompetent, whereas women and minorities faced discrimination merely on the basis of social prejudice. Silvers writes, "[t]o make disability a category that activates a heightened legal shield against exclusion, it was objected, would alter the purpose of legal protection for civil rights by transforming the goal from protecting opportunity for socially exploited people to providing assistance for naturally unfit people." The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 did add disability to the list of stigmatized identities covered by antidiscrimination law, but thus far the ADA has been interpreted so narrowly, and by such a business-friendly judiciary, that employers have won over 95 percent of the suits brought under the act.

Perhaps if plaintiffs with disabilities had won a greater number of cases over the past thirteen years, the conservative backlash against the ADA—currently confined to a few cranks complaining about handicapped parking spaces and a wheelchair ramp at a Florida nude beach—would be sufficiently strong as to spark a movement to repeal the law altogether. But then again, perhaps if the law were read more broadly, more Americans would realize their potential stake in it. In 1999, for instance, the Supreme Court ruled on three lower-court cases in which people with "easily correctable" disabilities—high blood pressure, nearsightedness—were denied employment. In three identical 7-2 decisions, the Court found that the plaintiffs had no basis for a suit under the ADA precisely *because* their disabilities were easily correctable. As disability activists and legal analysts quickly pointed out, this decision left these plaintiffs in the ridiculous situation of being too disabled to be hired but somehow not disabled enough to be covered by the ADA; or, to put this another way, plaintiffs' "easily correctable" disabilities were not so easily correctable as to allow them access to employment. One case involved twin sisters who were denied the opportunity to test as pilots for United Airlines on the grounds that their eyesight did not meet United's minimum vision requirement (uncorrected visual acuity of 20/100 or better without glasses or contacts) even though each sister had 20/20 vision with corrective lenses (*Sutton v. United Airlines, Inc.*); another involved a driver/mechanic with high blood pressure (*Murphy v. United Parcel Service*); the third involved a truck driver with monocular vision (20/200 in one eye) who in 1992 had received a Department of Transportation waiver of the requirement that truck drivers have distant visual acuity of 20/40 in each eye as well as distant binocular acuity of 20/40 (*Albertson's, Inc. v. Kirkingburg*). Because, as Silvers argues, "litigation under the ADA commonly turns on questions of classification rather than access," all three plaintiffs were determined to have no standing under the law. The question of whether any of them was justly denied employment was simply not addressed by the Court. Indeed, in writing her opinion for the majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor explicitly refused to consider the wider question of "access," noting that 160 million Americans would be covered by the ADA if it were construed to include people with "easily correctible" disabilities (under a "health conditions approach"), and since Congress had cited the number 43 million in enacting the law, Congress clearly could not have intended the law to be applied more widely. "Had Congress intended to include all persons

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with corrected physical limitations among those covered by the Act, it undoubtedly would have cited a much higher number of disabled persons in the findings," wrote O'Connor. "That it did not is evidence that the ADA's coverage is restricted to only those whose impairments are not mitigated by corrective measures."

It is possible to object that O'Connor's decision was excessively literalist, and that the potential number of Americans covered by the ADA is, in any case, quite irrelevant to the question of whether a woman can fly a plane when she's got her glasses on. But I've since come to believe that the literalism of the decision is an indirect acknowledgment of how broad the issues at stake here really are. If the ADA were understood as a broad civil rights law, and if it were understood as a law that potentially pertains to the entire population of the country, then maybe disability law would be understood not as a fringe addition to civil rights law but as its very fulfillment.

RIGHTS CAN BE created, reinterpreted, extended, and revoked. The passage of the ADA should therefore be seen as an extension of the promise of democracy, but only as a promise: any realization of the potential of the law depends on its continual reinterpretation. For the meaning of the word, just as Wittgenstein wanted us to believe (in order that we might be undeceived about how our words work), lies in its use in the language. Similarly, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (originally the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) was not some kind of breakthrough discovery whereby children with disabilities were found to be rights-bearing citizens of the United States after all, and who knew that we'd had it all wrong for 199 years? On the contrary, the IDEA *invented* a new right for children with disabilities, the right to a "free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment." And yet the IDEA did not wish that right into being overnight; the key terms "appropriate" and "least restrictive" had to be interpreted time and again, over the course of fifteen years, before they were understood to authorize "full inclusion" of children with disabilities in "regular" classrooms. Nothing about the law is set in stone. The only philosophical "foundation" underlying the IDEA and its various realizations is our own collective political will, a will that is tested and tested again every time the Act comes up for reauthorization. Jamie Bérubé currently has a right to an inclusive public education, but that right is neither intrinsic nor innate. Rather, Jamie's rights were invented, and implemented slowly and with great difficulty. The recognition of his human dignity, enshrined in those rights, was invented. And by the same token, those rights, and that recognition, can be taken away. While I live, I promise myself that I will not let that happen, but I live with the knowledge that it may: to live any other way, to live as if Jamie's rights were somehow intrinsic, would be irresponsible.

Of course, many of us would prefer to believe that our children have intrinsic human rights and human dignity no matter what; irrespective of any form of human social organization; regardless of whether they were born in twentieth-century Illinois or second-century Rome or seventh-century central Asia. But this is just a parent's—or a philosophical foundationalist's—wishful thinking. For what would it mean for Jamie to "possess" rights that no one on earth recognized? A fat lot of good it would do him. My argument may sound either monstrous or all too obvious: if, in fact, no one on earth recognized Jamie's human dignity, then there would in fact be no human perspective from which he would be understood to possess "intrinsic" human dignity. And then he wouldn't have it, and so much the worse for the human race.

In one respect, the promise of the IDEA, like the promise of the ADA, is clear: greater inclusion of people with disabilities in the social worlds of school and work. But in another sense the promise is unspecifiable; its content is something we actually cannot know in advance. For the IDEA does not merely guarantee all children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Even more than this, it grants the right to education in order that persons with disabilities might make the greatest possible use of their other rights—the ones having to do with voting, or employment discrimination,

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or with life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

IDEA is thus designed to enhance the capabilities of all American children with disabilities regardless of their actual abilities—and this is why it is so profound a democratic idea. Here again I'm drawing on Nancy Fraser, whose theory of democracy involves the idea of "participatory parity," and the imperative that a democratic state should actively foster the abilities of its citizens to participate in the life of the polity as equals. Fraser's work to date has not addressed disability, but as I noted above, it should be easy to see how disability is relevant to Fraser's account of the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution. This time, however, I want to press the point a bit harder. Fraser writes as if the promise of democracy entails the promise to enhance participatory parity among citizens, which it does, and she writes as if we knew what "participatory parity" itself means, which we don't. (This is why the promise of disability rights is unspecifiable.)

LET ME EXPLAIN. First, the idea of participatory parity does double duty in Fraser's work, in the sense that it names both the state we would like to achieve and the device by which we can gauge whether we're getting there. For in order to maintain a meaningful democracy in which all citizens participate as legal and moral equals, the state needs to judge whether its policies enhance equal participation in democratic processes. Yet at the same time, the state needs to enhance equal participation among its citizens simply in order to determine what its democratic processes will be. This is not a meta-theoretical quibble. On the contrary, the point is central to the practical workings of any democratic polity. One of the tasks required of democrats is precisely this: to extend the promise of democracy to previously excluded individuals and groups some of whom might have a substantially different understanding of "participatory parity" than that held by previously dominant groups and individuals.

Could anything make this clearer than the politics of disability? Imagine a building in which political philosophers are debating, in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, the value and the purpose of participatory parity over against forms of authoritarianism or theocracy. Now imagine that this building has no access ramps, no Braille or large-print publications, no American Sign Language interpreters, no elevators, no special-needs paraprofessionals, no in-class aides. Contradictory as such a state of affairs may sound, it's a reasonably accurate picture of what contemporary debate over the meaning of democracy actually looks like. How can we remedy this? Only when we have fostered equal participation in debates over the ends and means of democracy can we have a truly participatory debate over what "participatory parity" itself means. That debate will be interminable in principle, since our understandings of democracy and parity are infinitely revisable, but lest we think of deliberative democracy as a forensic society dedicated to empyreal reaches of abstraction, we should remember that debates over the meaning of participatory parity set the terms for more specific debates about the varieties of human embodiment. These include debates about prenatal screening, genetic discrimination, stem-cell research, euthanasia, and, with regard to physical access, ramps, curb cuts, kneeling buses, and buildings employing what is now known as universal design.

Leftists and liberals, particularly those associated with university humanities departments, are commonly charged with being moral relativists, unable or unwilling to say (even after September 11) why one society might be "better" than another. So let me be especially clear on this final point. I think there's a very good reason to extend the franchise, to widen the conversation, to democratize our debates, and to make disability central to our theories of egalitarian social justice. The reason is this: a capacious and supple sense of what it is to be human is better than a narrow and partial sense of what it is to be human, and the more participants we as a society can incorporate into the deliberation of what it means to be human, the greater the chances that that deliberation will in fact be transformative in such a way as to enhance our collective capacities to recognize each other as humans entitled to human dignity. As Jamie reminds me daily, both

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deliberately and unwittingly, most Americans had no idea what people with Down syndrome could achieve until we'd passed and implemented and interpreted and reinterpreted a law entitling them all to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. I can say all this without appealing to any innate justification for human dignity and human rights, and I can also say this: Without a sufficient theoretical and practical account of disability, we can have no account of democracy worthy of the name.

Perhaps some of our fellow citizens with developmental disabilities would not put the argument quite this way; even though Jamie has led me to think this way, he doesn't talk the way I do. But those of us who do participate in political debates, whether about school funding in a specific district or about the theory and practice of democracy at its most abstract, have the obligation to enhance the abilities of our children and our fellow citizens with disabilities to participate in the life of the United States as political and moral equals with their nondisabled peers—both for their own good, and for the good of democracy, which is to say, for the good of all of us. ●

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Ruminations on Cyber-Race

Jerry Kang

I am a Korean-American law professor with two very different research agendas. On the one hand, I am deeply curious about technology and its impact on society. My undergraduate degree is in physics, and I write about communications. On the other hand, as an immigrant and member of a racial minority, I am deeply curious about how race works in our minds and our society. Commitment to racial justice explains my shift from science into law. I assumed that my two areas of scholarly interest would not intersect in any theoretically interesting way. Then, one day in cyberspace, something remarkable happened

As background research on virtual communities, I was participating in graphical worlds. In these places, one picks an avatar (a graphic representation of the self), navigates visually depicted environments, and chats with other individuals. In one world, I played a young, muscular, bald black man. One afternoon, a character who appeared as a white female asked me whether I was an "African American" in real space. When I said "yes," I was sprayed with racist bile:

Perpetrator: hey nigger

Perpetrator: betta watch out we got an eye on you and others do to your reported to the aryan nation KKK mutherfucker!!

Perpetrator: eine mine mo catch a nigger by his toe and if he hollers let him go! HEHEHE

Perpetrator: KKK

Me: Why don't you come out to play? [The perpetrator had been sending me these messages privately, after disappearing from the room that I was in. I was trying to get her to reappear.]

Perpetrator: run nigger run <grin> [This was in response to my leaving the room, in which I was originally attacked.]

Me: Are you afraid to show yourself even in the virtual world?

Perpetrator: were are you at>??

Me: I'm at the teleporter, near Temple St.

Perpetrator: answer monkey boy

Me: So why are you so filled with hate?

Perpetrator: Im not just dont like niggers thats all

Perpetrator: white power!!

In the course of this "conversation," the assailant manipulated her avatar as well as other "physical" items in the virtual room as if she were striking me. It's hard to express how I felt about this "fighting words" episode. Although I've heard many epithets as a "chink" or "gook," I'd never been attacked as a black man. This vitriol felt different. It left me speechless.

It also got my mind going. Current race literature emphasizes that "race is a social construction." Current cyberspace literature emphasizes that it's all about the "code"—not codified-in-DC (East Coast) code but programmed-in-Silicon-Valley (West Coast) code—and that code is also a social construction. So I began wondering what happens when race is constructed through code, in cyberspace. What happens when a social construction evolves within a social construction? Could race, for example, be made to look different in cyberspace? And if so, how might that disrupt the typical ways in which we think about race in real space?

A Theory of Race

We need to start with a theory of race. We know "race" when we see it, but what exactly is it? And how does it work? Consider the following simplified model of racial mechanics, which draws from the literature of social cognition. In any social interaction, we map each other into racial categories that trigger associ-

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ated meanings. First, our law and culture provide a list of racial categories, such as black, white, Asian, Indian, through which we understand the basic idea of race. Second, when we encounter an individual, we collect data through our senses to map the individual to a category. Racial mapping can be based on physical appearance, but it can also take place discursively, in the disclosure of a surname, for example. Third, mapping triggers meanings—cognitive beliefs about and affective reactions to people in these racial categories. These may include, for instance, assumptions about foreignness ("Where are you from?"), intelligence ("Must be good at math"), attractiveness or its opposite, and so on.

These meanings, triggered automatically and subconsciously, alter our behavior; the behavioral changes can range from simply crossing the street, to voting for three-strikes-and-you're-out laws, to profiling Arabs as terrorists. Cumulatively, these micro alterations pile onto the existing sediment of history to preserve significant imbalances in wealth and power across racial categories. Notwithstanding the huge real-world impact of racial mechanics, it's important to see that the categories, the mapping rules, and the meanings are made up, not given to us by deity or DNA.

What Role for Cyberspace?

How can cyberspace change something as monumental as race and race relations? It can disrupt racial mechanics. In order to see how, we need to understand how cyberspace alters the ground rules of social interaction.

Cyberspace enables multiple forms of computer-mediated interactions, which vary along various metrics: temporal engagement (asynchronous versus synchronous), communication initiation (push versus pull), audience scope (one versus many), media richness (text-only versus multimedia). Through e-mail, threaded discussion forums, real-time chat, instant messaging, Weblogs, collaborative gaming, P2P (peer-to-peer), and multi-user domains (MUDs), people interact with each other at great distances, often in groups.

These communication technologies not only help people maintain social relationships originally constructed in real space but also facilitate new relationships originally formed in cyberspace. Typically, these relationships form in virtual communities of common interests, experiences, and fates. Such communities can be large; often their members have never met face-to-face. In these contexts, cyberspace functions less like a fax machine and more like sidewalk cafés with different themes or milieus. Those drawn to the Internet are often drawn to its sociality, not its data. The Net's "killer app" turns out to be other human beings.

Interestingly, cyber-mediated interactions are both more and less than real-space ones: "more" because they are not limited by arbitrary constraints such as geographical proximity; "less" because the medium provides less information than a face-to-face interaction, making possible anonymity and pseudonymity. Of course, my assessments here depend on the current technology, which will develop in extraordinary ways. Think how much our lives have changed since the Web came into being one decade ago. In two more, cyberspace will allow us to navigate graphically mediated environments of stunning complexity, detail, and realism. (For a preview, take a look at your kids' video games.) These advances have the potential to change everything, including racial mechanics. What design options do we have?

Abolition

I have bought my last two cars through a buying agent who tacks on a fixed commission. I do so primarily because it saves me time. But I also know the studies that demonstrate that car-purchase negotiations are racially discriminatory. So I took a self-help measure to disrupt normal racial mechanics by employing a purchasing intermediary to prevent racial mapping. In this way, I avoided even subconscious triggering of racial meanings. Can the potential of cyberspace for anonymity generalize this car story by abolishing race in cyber interactions?

Because of bandwidth limitations, most cyber interactions still take place through typed text. In contrast to a face-to-face encounter, text need not disclose morphology. This prompts giddy speculations about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream Version 2.0—to be

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judged by the content of one's text-characters, not the color of one's skin.

I find such hopes naive. Just because race is not signaled in cyberspace does not mean that race ceases to matter in cyberspace or, certainly, in real space. Race will continue to influence the content of one's communications even if the audience is not aware of the nature of that influence. Moreover, technological and demographic changes make blanket abolition infeasible.

To begin with, text does permit racial mapping, certainly explicitly ("I am Asian") and sometimes implicitly (consider cues from language, grammar, diction, names). In addition, text-only communication has little future, as the Internet moves to multimedia. A videocam is no more racially anonymous than a face-to-face encounter.

One could imagine society mounting an aggressive campaign to abolish race in cyberspace, even prohibiting racial self-identification. Compare the spirit of University of California regent Ward Connelly's Racial Privacy Initiative, which is trying to abolish "race" in California databases. Doing so across the board, through official legal action, would be an unconstitutional, content-based restraint on speech. And no bottom-up social or market forces seem likely to lead to widespread adoption of de-racing norms or technologies.

This is a good thing. Coercing people into an abolitionist environment would disparately harm people of color, for whom racial identity tends to be more important. To strongarm them into repressing that self-conception, even if only in cyberspace, is to ask some Americans to silence a part of themselves. Consider also the fact that collective politics must often organize around race to resist injustice based on race. Ham-fisted abolition would undermine such politics just as cyberspace matures into a serious political medium.

Integration

So if race cannot and should not be entirely abolished in cyberspace, can we adopt an integration strategy instead? Instead of trying to disrupt racial mapping through anonymity, can cyberspace help reform racial meanings by promoting social interactivity? This is what's called the "contact hypothesis" by social psychologists. It's *Brown v. Board of Education* for the twenty-first century.

As a threshold matter, will cyberspace increase social contact between the races? It does make geographical proximity less relevant. This partially lifts the choke hold that residential segregation puts on interracial social contact. In addition, cyberspace also makes talking with strangers easier because individuals are less fearful: after all, one's physical body is never at risk. All this, of course, assumes that racial minorities have access to cyberspace. If they don't, we have simply replaced geographical segregation (which is rampant, especially for African Americans) with electronic segregation.

Even if racial minorities are in cyberspace, that doesn't necessarily mean they will interact with other groups. Consider the frequent complaint about people of color sitting together all the time (which we rarely hear when people of noncolor do the same). It is true that virtual communities specifically designed for racial and ethnic groups are popular. But we should not exaggerate the problem of self-segregation. Virtual communities are centered around common interests, experiences, and fates. There is, however, no perfect identity between one's race and any of these: think about hip-hop, golf, child rearing, on-line videogaming, cancer. Interest in such matters is powerfully shaped by socioeconomic class, gender, and age, and people drawn together by these commonalities will hardly all be of the same race. Cyberspace, with its fundamental metaphor of hyperlink, invites exploration. Even if people start in isolated race-specific communities, which may be comfortable ports of entry, they will undoubtedly explore other cyber realms. That is the seduction of cyberspace.

Increased social contact is necessary but not sufficient to reform racial meanings. Social psychologists have identified various environmental conditions crucial to fighting prejudice. If built right, cyberspace could provide these conditions. Consider, for instance, the need for the social contact to disconfirm prevailing stereotypes. Why might cyberspace deliver more disconfirming data than real space?

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In real space, we navigate un-diverse communities (especially post-affirmative action); therefore, our cache of racial meanings is informed mostly by vicarious experiences with other races—imagined experiences, provided by mass media. Vicarious experiences are, however, often stereotypical. Commercial broadcasters peddle products that will attract the largest number of viewers; they pitch to the mainstream. In telling a story in thirty minutes or thirty seconds, simpler characters that tap into pre-existing racial meanings work best. Even in the news, we see photo editors disproportionately using photographs of blacks to illustrate poverty stories.

By contrast, in cyberspace, we navigate less segregated communities, which means that we will engage in more direct experiences with other races—experiences with actual people, not mediated by third parties. And direct experiences are less stereotypical than vicarious ones because there is less economic pressure for racial minorities to perform stereotypically for any audience.

Another required condition is that folks interact on terms of equal social status. Increased social contact will do little good if it is configured by drastic hierarchies. The relation of a "Mammy" to a white child did little to decrease racism. Some folks contend that cyberspace naturally generates ideal, anti-hierarchical environments. Nonsense. A boss's order to a temp worker is no less hierarchical because it comes over e-mail. Fortunately, a substantial amount of cybersocial contact takes place in contexts not configured by master-servant relationships. On bulletin boards and in chat rooms and MUDs, the vast majority of participants relate on equal terms, as if they were all patrons of a virtual café. No participant has any special power over the others, nor any special capacity to communicate in ways that others cannot. If participants are treated differently, it is usually on the basis of their reputations.

One might complain that differences in socioeconomic status present in real space will surely manifest themselves in cyberspace. No doubt they will. However, this may be a blessing in disguise. In real space, because residential segregation cuts across income, rich white folks do not live next to rich black folks. In cyberspace, however, both groups will congregate in virtual communities centered around fancy wines, stock tips, and perhaps even vacation spots.

Cooperation toward a joint goal is another important requirement. This defuses competition and highlights a common project rather than a common racial identity. Is there reason to think that cyberspace might promote cooperative relationships? Plenty of anecdotal evidence speaks to impressive acts of cooperation based on common interests, experiences, and fates: pregnant women share experiences; the elderly console each other after losing loved ones; patients fighting cancer provide information and support; gays and lesbians talk to each other about coming out.

An entirely separate mechanism with which to catalyze cooperation is to design short-term delays in racial disclosure. Let me give a real world example. One summer during college, I was hired at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. Over the phone, I arranged to live with a graduate student. It turned out that neither he nor my supervisor knew that I was Asian American until we met face to face. My phone voice, grammar, and accent did not prompt them to flip out of the default assumption: white. As for my name, they somehow heard "Jerry King." The telephone delayed the triggering of racial meanings associated with the category "Asian American." Assume that my roommate would have resisted rooming with an "Oriental": suppose he envisioned a gallon jar of kimchi stinking up his refrigerator or, worse yet, a percursor to Wen Ho Lee. The telephone's architecture would have prevented those racial meanings from affecting his housing decision. Over that summer, by cooperating with me as a colleague and roommate, his views of "Orientals" would likely have grown more complex, less exaggerated.

Thus, even if cyberspace cannot (and should not) be colorblind, a short-term delay might make sense. By embedding delay into the architecture, we could prevent racial meanings, which are often biased, from setting (subconsciously, perhaps) the initial terms of the social interaction. After race is disclosed, one

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or both parties may be surprised, as my Tennessee roommate was surprised at the airport. However, the relationship will already have been framed by the interaction that took place before disclosure.

FINALLY, none of this contact will amount to much unless it has some permanence and depth. Many Internet interactions are casual, superficial, and transient. But there are ways to encourage community, repeat-play, and persistent identity. Internet users who have gone deep into cyber community report their relationships there as remarkably genuine, deep, and significant. Recently I watched a touching and humane funeral service in an otherwise violent gaming world, in which a hundred characters declared a temporary truce and convened to honor the avatar and its real life person, who died of a heart attack. Right now, we might find this bizarre. In twenty years, it may not be unusual.

Transmutation

Recall my fighting words episode. There, I was broadcasting a different racial signal in cyberspace than in real space—what I call "cyber-passing." In real space, this is hard to do. By contrast, in cyberspace, it is far easier to wear racial masks. The transmutation approach argues that we should exploit this opportunity and all engage in cyber-passing to destabilize the very idea of racial categories.

To evaluate its merits, we need to examine more carefully what lessons cyber-passing teaches. Suppose that I decide to cyber-pass as an African American out of honest curiosity. The threshold act of choosing race may itself teach me something. In real space, my racial category seems to be a natural, biological characteristic, based on immutable morphology and ancestry. But in cyberspace, the racial signal I broadcast is the product of voluntary choice and intentional experimentation. This might prompt me to look at race differently, as less fixed. Over many months of serious method acting of this new identity, the presumed connection between identity and biology might corrode. In particular, I might no longer see the ancestry and morphology of my single physical body as constricting my identity.

But this upbeat story relies on numerous controversial assumptions. For instance, who has time to engage in serious transmutation? Worse, transmutation has significant downsides. On the one hand, if the audience never discovers the cyber-pass, then racial meanings may be reworked in dangerous ways. I might intentionally play in Amos & Andy-like blackface, acting as an ignorant buffoon speaking "jive." Even without intentional parody, how do I know what it means to "act black"? Given residential and social segregation, my knowledge will come from the mass media. Accordingly, my performance seriously risks stereotype. The audience may nonetheless receive my performance as authentic because it will hold the same stereotypes that I hold. Moreover, the audience's credulous reception will reinforce my own stereotypes about what blackness means. In the end, we may all unwittingly consume black/red/yellow-face, while believing it to be an "authentic" direct experience.

On the other hand, if the audience discovers the cyber-pass, it will start questioning the value of the racial signal transmitted in cyberspace. Perhaps this is a good thing. People would no longer be judged by the color of their (virtual) skin. But we have seen this argument before. Transmutation has collapsed into abolition: the racial mask now functions as a racial veil. In this environment of transmutation-collapsed-into-abolition, I will learn no lesson in empathy. Even the racists will not trust the racial signal.

Implications

Abolition, integration, and transmutation all sit in tension with each other. As just explained, transmutation conflicts with integration. Integration also conflicts with abolition: the entire point of abolition is to be race-blind, whereas integration requires people to see each other's race (eventually) and to interact with members of different races. Finally, abolition conflicts with transmutation. Abolition permits individuals to express every facet of their identity save one: race. The transmutation approach finds this counterproductive because it removes the one specific dimension of identity experimentation—race—that needs the most tweaking.

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Given such conflicts, which strategy should we pick? Luckily, we don't have to choose a single architecture for all of cyberspace. Instead, we can "racially zone" cyberspace by adopting different environments for different spaces. This approach captures important synergies and diversifies our policy portfolio of risk.

Marketplaces. Let us go back to my car-purchase anecdote. Even if abolition is not appropriate generally for cyber spaces, it makes plenty of sense for markets. For most discrete marketplace transactions, being race-conscious produces no net positive benefit. For example, no one argues for race-based affirmative action in car-buying. Consider then the impact of abolition on large economic transactions, such as automobile purchases, insurance, personal loans, and mortgages. These transactions are today negotiated face-to-face, thereby triggering racial schemas. If they were instead executed through communication systems that filtered out race and its proxies, then racial discrimination (of the disparate treatment variety, conscious or unconscious, based on personal animus or impersonal statistics) would decrease. Ending today's disparate treatment would do nothing to rectify the material legacy of a racist past. Still, this would not be a trivial contribution to racial equality.

Social Spaces. In a greater number of social spaces, abolition would not only be difficult but also inappropriate. Between integration and transmutation, I am more sanguine about integration. To get integration to work, we must build it, designing it carefully according to the principles already discussed. For example, Internet Service Providers, virtual community operators, and technology companies (both software and hardware) should develop user interfaces that promote some chance encounters with other people. Instead of avatars jumping from space to space by a click of a mouse, why not have them "walk" through a few public areas along the way? Also, as in my Tennessee roommate story, we could experiment with delays in disclosing racial cues, for example by encouraging the use of pseudonyms ("handles"), with first names, then last names, then photos available through successive clicks of the mouse.

Even skeptics concede that cyberspace is a powerful social force. Some fear that that force is negative. Cass Sunstein, for instance, has worried in his recent book *Republic.com* about our cocooning off into factions. That is a risk we should take seriously. Still, far more positive and progressive futures are possible, and imagining those futures must take place now if they are ever to be achieved. If we don't even imagine such possibilities today, we will look back upon cyberspace the same way that we look on television—with regret, at opportunities not seized, therefore lost.

There are novel options here, configured not only by new technologies but also by new politics. For example, consider how Americans along a broad political spectrum could agree on zoning most market places for "abolition." Consider also how cyberspace offers a way to increase direct interracial social interaction without the actual and perceived zero-sum conflicts inherent in, say, school busing. The thoughts I present here are not science fiction, but they are tentative. I share them in the hope of provoking users, engineers, regulators, and lawmakers to think through cyber-race and to engage in a collective form of city planning. If we are coding a new "cyburban" reality, let us at least make new mistakes. ●

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Right-wing Patriotism

What William Bennett Doesn't Understand

Jeffrey C. Isaac

THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington shocked and outraged most Americans. It is common to respond to what is shocking and unexpected by invoking familiar vocabularies and seeking the comfort of ideological certitudes. So it is hardly surprising that many on the American left responded in just such a way, recurring to the language of "anti-imperialism," "peace," and "global justice" to condemn the U.S. military response and U.S. foreign policy more generally. For them, the "real" problem was not al-Qaeda or even terrorism. It was the system of global capitalism dominated by the United States. Such reactions were rightly criticized, in these pages and elsewhere, by those leftists who believed that the problem behind the 9/11 attacks is indeed *terrorism*, that the unfortunate record of U.S. foreign policy neither explains the resort to terror nor mitigates its malevolence, that a U.S. military response was necessary and just, and that only the United States can lead an effort to destroy terrorist networks that pose a general threat to any acceptable conception of civilized life.

Though this has been less noticed, American conservatives responded to 9/11 in a very similar way. For them, of course, the standard trope was not "America as imperial power" but "America as all that is noble and just and good in the world" (see Dinesh D'Souza's aptly titled *What's So Great About America*). But beyond the exaltation of a mythical "America," many conservatives treated the 9/11 attacks as an occasion to revive the "culture wars" of the 1980s and to target the left, and liberalism more generally, as the real enemy. This has been a standard refrain on the television talk show circuit, especially on Fox News (9/11 seems to have done for Fox what the Gulf War did for CNN and, long ago, the Iran hostage crisis for *Nightline* on ABC). You can find it also in such recent best-sellers as Ann Coulter's *Slander: Liberal Lies About the American Right* and Sean Hanitty's even more tendentious *Let Freedom Ring: Winning the War of Liberty over Liberalism*. Similar themes have been articulated, in more refined but potentially more dangerous form, in a number of speeches by Lynne Cheney, and in a report put out by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni—an organization founded by Cheney and Senator Joseph Lieberman—entitled "Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America, and What Can Be Done About It."

The basic themes of this conservative argument are easily summarized: whereas ordinary Americans are righteously indignant and angry about terrorism, liberal intellectuals and academics have so exalted critical reason that they are incapable of common sense; while Americans are rightly patriotic, liberals are either insidiously cosmopolitan or downright anti-American; and while the response to terrorism requires moral clarity and courage, liberals promote ambivalence, doubt, and dissent, all signs of moral weakness in the face of evil.

The central statement of this ideological position is William Bennett's *Why We Fight: Moral Clarity and the War on Terrorism*. Bennett long ago established himself as an elite spokesperson for "civic virtue" and "common sense," a defender of ordinary sensibilities who at the same time speaks from a special vantage point as someone who is educated and in the know. Bennett is the common person's intellectual, who refines what ordinary Americans supposedly think but also has sufficient intellectual *gravitas* to be able to expose the failings of the intellectual class. In *The Death of Moral Outrage*, Bennett presented the Clinton administration as an incarnation of everything that is

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hostile to American decency, and interpreted the failure of a sufficient number of intellectuals to share this view (it is an uncomfortable fact that most ordinary Americans also failed to share this view) as a sign of their essential moral turpitude. In *Why We Fight* the apparent source of evil has shifted—from Bill Clinton to Osama bin Laden. But the underlying malady remains the same: the reticence or skepticism of liberal intellectuals. And the antidote, too, remains the same: moral clarity and outrage sufficient to overpower any and all ambivalence.

For Bennett, the events of 9/11 were a defining moment when, after decades of sixties-inspired skepticism and cynicism, Americans recovered their moral senses. "Across the nation patriotic ardor burned bright. . . .Righteous anger and resolve had joined in support of our leaders, our armed forces, our country. For the first time in a long while there was a palpable, shared sense that this was indeed our country, and that it was a country worth fighting for." And yet the central thesis of his book is that this "moral clarity" is not universally shared, and that those who remain unclear pose a danger to the country. For although one cannot question the pervasiveness of the patriotic revival, political influence "was another matter. Yes, the majority of Americans had achieved, or perhaps never entirely lost, moral clarity about our nation. But how secure was it? And would it last?" Bennett's answer to the first question: not sufficiently secure. And his answer to the second: it will last only if it is defended against its principal enemies—not terrorists but American intellectuals and college professors.

According to Bennett, cultural relativism and moral cowardice have "come to dominate virtually every one of our major cultural and educational institutions. . . .For forty years, leading educators and intellectuals had been saying and writing and teaching that the United States was no better and might even be worse than its enemies." Even though the national will has been "aroused," and "righteous anger" has spread, these educators and intellectuals "sow a truly widespread and debilitating confusion." Bennett's mission is to contest their dissenting predispositions and ideas, to limit the damage they have caused, and to defeat them. But he also seeks to "differentiate" social critics who "feed doubt," and thus promote "moral perversity," from ordinary Americans—and hold them to account. *Why We Fight* catalogues the supposed deficiencies of the intelligentsia, defends the "moral clarity" of patriotic Americans currently rallying behind flag and president, and urges a vigorous "battle" against liberalism on behalf of America.

Echoing a litany of conservative complaints going back to Edmund Burke (if not Aristophanes), Bennett laments the decline of "sturdy" virtues and the spread of a critical spirit. Unlike Burke, however, Bennett writes not in a time of revolution but when there exists no politically viable alternative to the status quo, and when intellectual incredulity about the possibility of such an alternative is pervasive. This makes Bennett's rancor all the more striking, and all the more objectionable. It would be easy to demonstrate that his book, and the spate of similar books and articles, is tendentious, unsubstantiated, and ideological, and that it exploits the current crisis for partisan advantage. But I think that it would be both too easy and unwise to respond in this way to Bennett. For he is not wrong when he wishes to criticize some of the "antiwar" arguments that have been advanced in the wake of 9/11. Neither is he wrong to want to define the "we" who support a fight against terrorism and to suggest our reasons. It is precisely because there is a real crisis and a real enemy that it is important to address these issues. But this requires a kind of proportion and judiciousness that is noticeably absent from the conservative screeds. What is needed, in short, is a moral clarity unknown to Bennett—the moral clarity of serious inquiry, liberal values, and a patriotism that is constitutional and robustly democratic.

THE PEOPLE who planned and executed the attacks of 9/11, and who plan future attacks in the name of a militant Islamist ideology, are enemies of the United States. They are also enemies of international law, human rights, and liberal universalism. They ought to be condemned, fought, and defeated. Bennett seeks to use these truths to

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advance a conservative agenda. But they are truths all the same. Moral clarity requires that they be stated and acted upon. Those of us on the democratic left who have supported the fight against al-Qaeda understand this. We have never expressed unqualified support for the Bush administration, or the way the war in Afghanistan has been fought, or the way the terrorist threat has been used to justify the abrogation of civil liberties or the promulgation of Manichean visions of struggle between Good and Evil. But we have nonetheless been supporters of the use of force against terror, and to that extent we have made common cause with conservatives such as Bennett. Bennett is a political adversary, but he is also a fellow citizen of a democratic state. George W. Bush may be a president who came to power under questionable circumstances and who promotes a political agenda that we oppose. But he is also the chief executive of the United States. Neither Bennett nor Bush is a terrorist, and the kind of overblown rhetoric to be found in some left quarters, according to which there is no difference between Bush (or Bennett) and Bin Laden (see the cover of Tariq Ali's *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*), is simply overblown rhetoric. In the fight against al-Qaeda and its allies, we are on the same side.

At the same time, Bennett is a poor defender of the U.S. Constitution and of democracy more generally. Indeed, in his outraged identification with supposedly yeoman virtues and his attacks against supposedly spineless intellectuals (Am I alone in noticing that most conservative anti-intellectual intellectuals, especially the male ones, protest the decline of "toughness" a little too much?), Bennett does a great disservice to the values that alone give meaning to the project of fighting terrorism.

Bennett's book is the intellectual equivalent of declarations by President Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, that "you are either with us or against us." The problem here is twofold. The first is, quite simply, an arrogant conflation of commitment to the U.S. Constitution and even to the American Republic with a loyalty to the ideas and agendas of Bush and Rumsfeld and their intellectual comrades in arms. But many Americans, even many American intellectuals, have supported a military response to al-Qaeda without signing on to the Bush administration's broader unilateralist vision, or its domestic restrictions, or even its reluctance to place U.S. troops in harm's way. There seems to be little room in Bennett's account for such positions, which, on his view, fall far short of rallying around flag and President.

The second is an even more serious assumption that to question the sufficiency or even the necessity of a military response is somehow to align oneself with the enemies of freedom. This is an incendiary charge, one that surely is as irresponsible as the most vitriolic anti-American statements. It is one thing to fight for freedom, and to defend this fight in a spirited way. It is another to imagine that your fight is simply Right and that those who question it are simply Wrong. Yet Bennett's rhetoric tends strongly—"resolutely" in his words—in this latter direction. As a result, his book explains why he fights, but it fails to explain why many others fight, or why they should fight, and what they should be fighting for.

Although Bennett's version of "moral clarity" is insufficiently clear about many important things, three stand out.

1. The difference between simple and constitutional patriotism: Bennett fails to consider what "love of country" means and what about one's country merits "love" or any special attachment. Clearly, he is revolted by the disregard for human freedom signified by terrorism, and he rightly believes that the U.S. Constitution and the American political system codify freedoms worth defending. But in Bennett's discourse "freedom" becomes serious only when attacked by terrorists, and its defense is a way of fighting not only against terrorists but also against others who are not terrorists but who are presumptuous enough to disagree with Bennett. "Freedom" becomes a rhetorical weapon in the battle against anyone who lacks Bennett's "moral clarity." So freedom becomes a particular conception of "freedom" that glorifies America and condemns any skepticism about the glorification.

To be fair to Bennett, his version of America is not a chauvinistic one. All of those who truly "love" America, whatever their race or ethnicity

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or religion, are included. But it is an ideological version, according to which those who question America's historical record or its role in the world or even the policies of its current government (the previous government is another thing entirely) thereby call into question their civic credentials.

This is an impoverished and anti-intellectual conception of patriotism. It marginalizes exactly that which is most worthy of respect and commitment—the existence of constitutional government, the rule of law, the codification of civil liberties, and the practice of democratic dissent. What Bennett fails to see is that the defense of freedom is inextricably bound up with its robust exercise. The exercise of freedom is to the democratic body politic what aerobic exercise is to the human body—what energizes it and what keeps it alive and flourishing.

I can imagine Bennett's rejoinder. "Of course freedom matters," he might say. "That is why we fight. But liberals such as you are not really serious about fighting. If you were you would focus your energy on the terrorist Evil and not on conservative writers like me. And you would understand that at the moment of decision it is sometimes necessary to join ranks and put complaining aside and defend your country. Ordinary Americans understand this. Why can't you?" This is the thrust of Bennett's book. The obvious failing of such an argument is that for the most part it is Bennett and his conservative colleagues, and not liberal intellectuals, who are using 9/11 as an occasion to attack their political adversaries. It can't be illegitimate to respond to such attacks. But more significantly, Bennett's argument rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of democracy. For the exercise of democratic freedom is never more necessary than during times of crisis, and especially during times of war.

This is because any war that is justifiable requires the unforced support of the nation's citizens. Most American citizens have supported the war in Afghanistan because they believe that this war is intended to defend them and what they hold most dear. But precisely because it is a war in defense of freedom, it must not be used as a pretext to *limit* freedom. Some sacrifices of liberty—regarding airport security, visa requirements, and perhaps even FBI surveillance of those reasonably deemed "terrorists"—may now be necessary in the name of security. But such sacrifices must be carefully specified and publicly justified; they must be clearly defined legally and monitored by independent judges; they must be explained to, and overseen by, Congress; and they must be as minimal and as temporary as possible. Most important, such sacrifices should never abridge core democratic values, especially freedom of expression and association and the right to due process of the law. Legalism is not a quibbling matter. It is at the heart of our system of government. Those who have advocated on behalf of civil liberties, and those who have sought to exercise their civil liberties by challenging government policy, are not threatening American freedom. They are defending it. Whether one agrees with everything they say or not, this bears constant repetition.

FURTHERMORE, civil liberties are not simply the valued and necessary rights of free individuals; they are the preconditions of a well-functioning democracy. Democracy is not synonymous with high presidential approval ratings. It involves more than elections—whether fairly tabulated or not—and the obligation of citizens to abide by the laws of those who have been elected. (The former communist "people's democracies," we may recall, had elected leaders. Saddam Hussein himself was recently "re-elected" in a landslide that would have made Stalin jealous.) Democracy is a system of popular self-government based on the idea that no individual or group has a monopoly on the truth, and that a plurality of views must thrive and be allowed political voice in order for public policy to be legitimate and intelligent. Democracy requires diversity, plurality, disagreement, and dissent. These are not dangers to democracy. They are its lifeblood. Democracy is inconsistent with the official exploitation of fear and anxiety. And it is inconsistent with the arrogant claim that only the Führer or the Party or the Mullah or the President or the Attorney General or the Philosopher of Moral Rectitude knows the Truth, and that all those who disagree with him are wrong or, worse, Enemies of the People.

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Such arrogance is not simply an affront to all citizens and the freedom they cherish. It is not simply an incitement to repression. It is also a recipe for disaster. For the result can be nothing other than bad policy and an inability to correct it.

2. The difference between parochial values and universal values: it is wholly appropriate for American citizens to respond to attacks on the United States *as* American citizens, to feel particularly threatened, and to believe that the state that acts in their name ought to respond in the name of their security and freedom. Constitutional patriotism is a morally valid commitment. But insofar as constitutional patriotism is a loyalty to one's country based on the freedoms that are its historical achievement, this patriotism points beyond itself, to the value of those freedoms as such, and to a moral commitment to the idea that these freedoms are universal and ought to be extended to those, everywhere, currently being denied them.

Few Americans, including Bennett, would be likely to deny this in principle. Indeed, we are often told that we fight against terrorism in order to make the world safe for freedom elsewhere. But all too often this project of "liberation" means nothing more than the exercise of American power in the world (the Bush administration's new planning document on national security in the twenty-first century takes this model to new heights of arrogance). Rarely are the true implications of such a moral universalism taken seriously—which would mean taking seriously certain things that many self-proclaimed "patriots" have little concern for: international law, multilateral and global forms of governance, human rights, and responsible forms of globalization. Equally important are the principles of just war, which have too often been dismissed by conservatives, and especially Pentagon officials, in recent public discussions. Bennett is not wrong to be angry about terrorist attacks. Many on the liberal left, myself included, are no less angry. But public policy should not be driven by anger, and it should not be a means of seeking vengeance. It should be a means of achieving justice by means of justice, to the fullest extent possible, even in times of war. This means that we should care deeply and publicly about the requisites of a just war, and just as seriously about the requisites of a just peace.

It is correct to insist that terrorism is not simply a reflection of "deeper" maladies for which the United States is ultimately responsible. Terrorism is a malevolent reality that must be fought as such. But it is possible to say this and also acknowledge that the way the world is organized matters, and the way others in the world view the United States and view liberalism matters too. Fighting terrorism is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Equally important is the project of creating a better world, a world that is more just and, because it is more just, is more secure and more peaceful. Working toward this goal is not "giving in" to terrorism. It is fighting effectively against terrorism and, more important, it is a way to realize the values that give meaning to the fight against terrorism.

3. The difference between the moral and the political: conservatives such as Bennett are correct to insist on the importance of morality in politics. It is wholly appropriate to make strong moral judgments, and to put your politics in the service of such judgments. Indeed, within the boundaries of the law, there exists an extraordinary degree of latitude for the practice of such a politics, plenty of space for the harsh anti-liberalism of Bennett and for the equally harsh anti-liberalism of some antiwar activists and protesters. For Bennett these critics of the United States are dangerous and immoral. For the critics, Bennett is dangerous and immoral. Both combatants view their own moral standpoints as the only authentic moral standpoints. And although neither goes so far as literally to construct their adversary as an enemy to be fought by any means necessary, both figuratively construct the adversary in exactly that way.

Such a moralization of politics is neither unintelligible nor illegal. But it is politically dangerous. It obscures important differences and distinctions. It enacts an arrogance that borders on megalomania. Most important, it undermines the ethos of a democratic society. The premise of a democratic society is that the plurality of opinions is an

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ineliminable feature of the human condition; that's what makes democracy necessary. A healthy skepticism toward what one stands for politically and a reluctance to demonize others with whom one shares a common political world are necessary features of our public life. They cannot be mandated by law. But they are central parts of the infrastructure of democratic politics. What this means is that one can strongly disagree with others without vilifying them or castigating them as immoral or terroristic or "enemies of the people." To adopt the position I am advocating is not to defend moral relativism. It is to defend *the moral value of democracy* and the *moral priority* of the practices that constitute a liberal democratic state. It is precisely because of the moral priority of these practices that we must fight terrorist networks that threaten them. But for this very same reason we must be clear about who and what "the enemy" is, and isn't.

The moral failing of Bennett's book, and of the discourse of post–9/11 anti-liberalism more generally, is that it doesn't do this. Playing fast and loose with the danger of terrorism and the traumas of the nation, it casts moral guilt too widely, too vindictively. It is one thing to disagree with others and even to organize politically against them. It is another to figure them as enemies of the republic or of the people, and to call for days of "reckoning" to come. In failing to understand this distinction, Bennett fails to understand why we fight. ●

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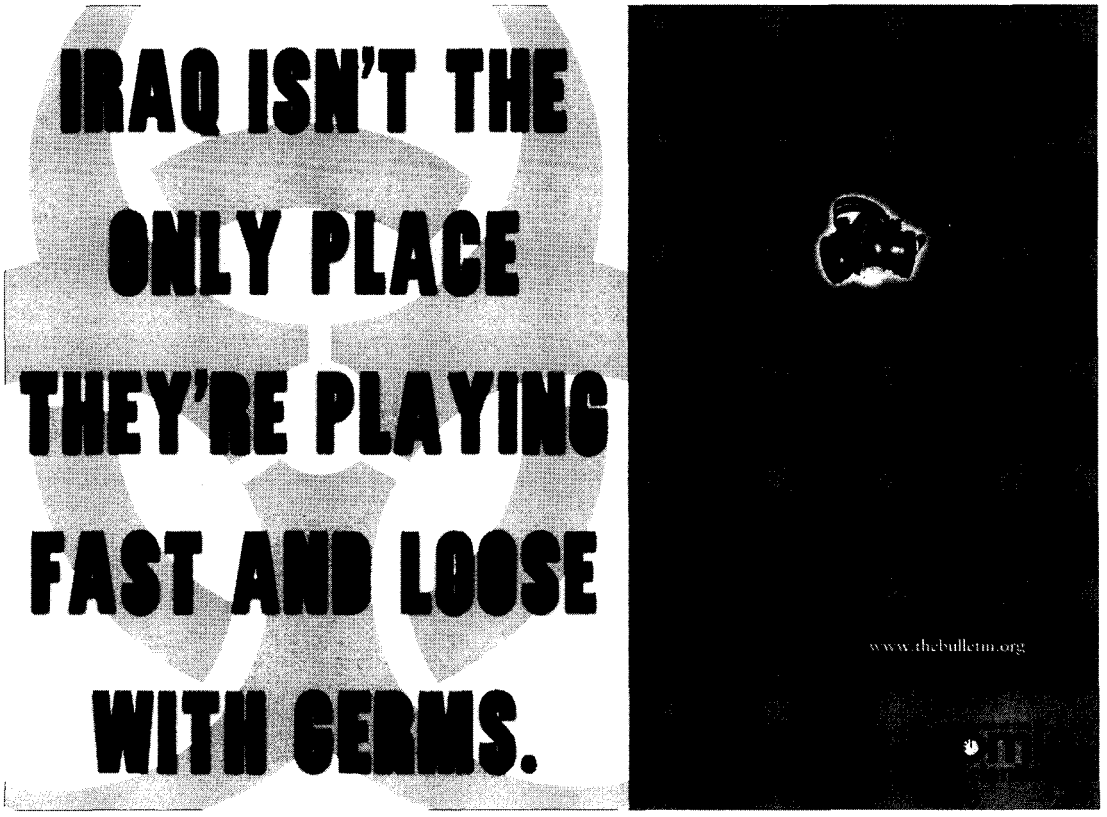

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Reviewing Irving Howe

Nicholas Howe

In critical reviews and essays about my father, Irving Howe, one frequently encounters a certain neat formulation that declares he was a man who wrote about what he lived and knew.* He grew up with Yiddish as his first language, so inevitably he edited many volumes of translations from that language and then wrote *World of Our Fathers*; he grew up as a teenage socialist in the Bronx, so inevitably he edited *Dissent* and wrote books on the American Communist Party, Trotsky, and socialism in America; he entered into a world of ideas about literature around *Partisan Review* that was more European than American in taste, so inevitably he wrote about Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Stendhal.

For all the truth in these claims, they seem too retrospectively clever, if not too convenient, in reducing the intellectual work of almost fifty years to covert autobiography. Faced with the range and quantity of his life's work, writers have tried to make sense of it all through claims of the inevitable. And, as the reviews in this volume show, there was a great deal of work. The books alone make a considerable pile when stacked together on a desk, and there was much that Howe chose never to reprint in a book: reviews, political articles, op-ed pieces, letters to the editor, all of them part of a writer's daily life.

There was one aspect of the writer's life my father did not understand and could be harshly dismissive about. At the mention of "writer's block," he would scoff and say simply that writers were writers because they sat down each day and wrote just as other people went to work each day. That routine was how one learned to write well. Certainly not every piece was for the ages, nor was everything even to be published, and anything (he would always add) could be improved if it were run through another draft and cut by at least ten percent. But the act of writing, day in and day out, mattered to him in ways that breathing and eating matter to other people. That discipline explains much about his life and not simply his productivity. It explains as well his understanding that among all of the books and articles of any working critic, some written out of a long life of reading and others fired off in response to that morning's headline, most would fade but a few would, with luck, remain vital and survive.

What counted was staying engaged with politics and literature, sometimes more with one than the other, sometimes fleeing from one to the other, but always thinking about both. As for the question that seems to have most intrigued those who have written about him—what was the relation in his mind between politics and literature?—the best answer would be in the practice of his life's work. Or, in another way, the answer could only be that the relation was never fixed but continually shifted, depending on a new novel he was reading or the political events of the moment or a rereading of one of his necessary writers such as Stendhal.

Perhaps because my relation to my father grew more from literature than politics, I want to begin with a different response to his life's work than the one I sketched at the start of this piece. In the last fifteen years of his life, we exchanged our writing for each other's criticism and came to trust each other completely as readers. Whatever else went unsaid between us, we could speak with absolute honesty and frankness about each other's prose. We also spoke frequently about ideas we had for new

*This article is taken from the introduction to *The Worlds of Irving Howe*, a collection of essays and reviews of Irving Howe's work edited by John Rodden, forthcoming, Nebraska University Press.

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projects, most of which remained in the realm of talk. But those conversations taught me to wonder how it was that anyone comes to a subject and then spends years working on it for a book. Reading through the reviews in this volume thus posed a question for me, one that offers a more oblique approach to understanding the shape of my father's career. Put simply, why were all three of Irving Howe's books about individual authors devoted to figures who were far more rural or traditional in their subjects and settings than they were urban or modernist? Why Sherwood Anderson, William Faulkner, and Thomas Hardy rather than Edith Wharton, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad? I choose these three counter possibilities because he was sufficiently engaged with them to have written a strong essay about each. But not a book. Even for a prolific writer of books, it matters that he should have devoted three to the likes of Anderson, Faulkner, and Hardy.

On the face of it, the choice was anything but predictable. And to some it could seem regrettable. Reviewing his book on Anderson, published in 1951, Malcolm Cowley argued in no uncertain terms that my father lacked the imagination and experience to understand such an author:

> [Howe] would have done a better job with Goethe or Gandhi. Anderson, the Midwesterner, is simply out of his orbit. Howe is an easterner and a city dweller, not a townsman. He has a philosophic mind, thinks in terms of concepts (rather than terms of things or feelings), uses a great many abstract words, and is not afraid to make dogmatic judgments. ... Howe has no sympathy for [Anderson's] method and I doubt that he understands it. He has little feeling for the rhythm of sentences and none for the shape or color of words. He likes clear ideas, solid constructions based on European culture; essentially, he doesn't like uneducated men who grope and fumble for a new sense of life. ... Howe thinks in terms of concepts. Anderson feels in terms of tangible things. They speak different languages and belong to different nations of the mind.

In suggesting that Howe was not by temperament or background attuned to Anderson's work, Cowley all but pronounces that one must be a townsman from the Midwest to be so attuned. In ways that Cowley could not have foreseen, and probably would have found alarming, these sentences anticipate a style of criticism associated with identity politics that flourished in American literary study in the late 1980s and 1990s. I quote from this fifty-two-year-old review, however, not to settle old scores on my father's behalf; but rather to suggest how even a wonderfully astute literary critic like Cowley—and one my father admired deeply for his work on Faulkner—could have been so sure at first encounter that Howe was nothing more than what he seemed: a Jewish socialist from New York with European tastes.

No doubt Irving Howe was a Jewish socialist from New York with European tastes, so much so that he came to represent the species of the New York Intellectual in the American press, or at least in the part of that press that cared about such matters. One admirer went so far as to call him, after his death, the last of the Russian intellectuals. But how did he get to be a New York intellectual? It was not simply, I think, by having been born a city boy in the Bronx in 1920. That explanation is too limited, precisely because it does not engage with his belief in literature's power to transform the imagination. There was more to him than his background, and the failure of many critics to see that in him explains, I think, their partial understanding of him and his work.

So let me go back to Anderson, Faulkner, and Hardy. In one of the most personal paragraphs he ever wrote about literature's power to shape the reader beyond the circumstances of background and experience, my father evoked his boyhood encounter with Sherwood Anderson:

> I must have been no more than fifteen or sixteen years old when I first chanced upon *Winesburg, Ohio*. Gripped by these stories and sketches of Sherwood Anderson's small-town "grotesques," I felt that he was opening for me new depths of experience, touching upon half-buried truths which nothing in my young life had prepared me for. A New York City boy who never saw the crops grow or spent time in the small towns that lay sprinkled across America, I found myself overwhelmed by the scenes of wasted life, wasted love—was this the "real"

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> America?—that Anderson sketched in *Winesburg*. In those days only one other book seemed to offer so powerful a revelation, and that was Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*.

He published these words in 1993, the last year of his life, and they seem to me some of the most revealing he ever wrote because they speak to his beginnings as a reader and thus as a writer. The phrases in this paragraph that immediately engage me speak of "wasted life, wasted love" because they apply directly to both Anderson and Hardy. And in ways that a reader of his book on Faulkner can imagine, they apply to that novelist as well.

Rephrasing my earlier characterization of Anderson, Faulkner, and Hardy would make my point clearer. These writers were not so much rural and traditional (as opposed simply to urban and modernist) as they were chroniclers of the passage from some form of traditional life into the crisis of modernity. The rural setting mattered, I think, for my father in each case because it limned that transition more evocatively than might have been otherwise possible. Or at least the rural setting helped him see that transition more starkly than he might in novelists of urban life who would, perhaps paradoxically, have been too familiar in their terrain to allow him that sort of recognition.

There is another element to consider here, and that concerns the fictional characters who struggled with this transition—some making it successfully, but many more being wounded or destroyed in the attempt. George Willard, the narrator of *Winesburg*, and Jude Fawley, the central character of Hardy's novel, are both young men striving toward an intellectual life located in an urban center beyond the villages of their boyhood. Both are on the periphery of a larger intellectual and cultural world, one as a reporter and the other as an architect's draftsman; both are removed from manual labor but neither is fully able to realize his creative yearnings and satisfy his ambitions. As my father wrote, "Jude is Hardy's equivalent of the self-educated worker: the self-educated worker transplanted into the Wessex world." The waste that each evoked for my father was not just of love; it was also a waste of the mind, of gifted people denied entry into a world of intellectual life because of their background.

That Cowley should have said, "Essentially, he doesn't like uneducated men who grope and fumble for a new sense of life," seems in retrospect an almost willful misreading. Howe had grown up among men and women who were uneducated or barely self-educated, who groped and fumbled for a new sense of life. Had it not been for a tuition-free City College of New York, he might well himself have been such a figure in the Great Depression years of his youth. His recognition of that kinship was the basis for his socialism and kept him from renouncing it even as it became less an actual politics than the name of his desire. His commitment to socialism was grounded not so much in ideology as it was in experience. He had the right to claim kinship with Jude Fawley just as he also had the obligation to recognize that his own life was better because there were available to him such things as free public colleges in times of economic crisis. That his politics was grounded in a memory of lives thwarted and denied kept him on the left, unlike those old comrades who were able to trade off one ideology for another as they became neoconservatives.

This struggle for a decent life, one in which human desires could be articulated freely and with some hope that they might be satisfied, was at the heart of his politics. It extended as well to his response to certain novels. Praising Zola's *Germinal*, for example, he said that it "releases one of the central myths of the modern era: the story of how the dumb acquire speech." It extended as well, though on a different scale, to the history he wrote in *World of Our Fathers*. That book may not be principally about how the dumb acquire speech, but it certainly is about how uneducated immigrants groped toward a new sense of life. If today the story of immigrant Jews who spoke Yiddish and struggled for a new life seems as much a part of the national experience as does the story of native Ohioans who spoke American and struggled to make their way to the city, then at least some of the credit belongs to him on both scores.

AFTER MY PARENTS divorced in the early 1960s, my father left many of his books behind in our house. I grew up reading

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novels with his marginalia, his underlinings, his traces. He was not a heavy annotator of books, but worked instead by scribbling a key word or two in the margin or, more frequently, by drawing a series of vertical lines and checkmarks (the more lines or checkmarks, the more noteworthy the passage seemed to him). There would occasionally be a question mark beside a historical reference or foreign word, a signal (I take it) that he left for himself to go back and look something up. Books he used for teaching often had their endpapers covered with page numbers, references, and brief comments; these jottings formed his working index, a set of notes that would never be separated from the book. Reading one of those books, often an old hardcover Modern Library volume, I would sometimes be distracted by his pencilings, but would usually stop to reread the passage he marked because it was a way to learn from him. Only many years later did I also come to understand that these markings were the signs of his self-education. For he was neither a trained academic with a Ph.D., nor simply a journalist who reviewed new books or wrote about current events. He was something in between, and that meant leaving himself open to attacks and celebrations from all parties.

Those markings he left in books can be read as his version of graduate school. He told me sometimes that he regretted his lack of formal literary training, and he always spoke admiringly of serious scholars, most obviously of art historian Meyer Schapiro, but he also knew that his place as a writer was defined by a certain distance from both academic and journalistic writing. Or, perhaps it would be truer to say, he wanted as a writer to have the best of each: the learning of the serious scholar without the pedantry, the engagement of the independent journalist without the superficiality. Occupying a place between academic and journalistic writing meant that no one could predict what would interest him next. I suspect that the most revealing way to track his development as a writer would be to map the books he reviewed year in and year out, and then consider how those reviews influenced books and articles he went on to write years later. Reviewing, he used to joke, was a way of putting shoes on his kids. (And neither I nor my sister, Nina, ever went shoeless.) It was, more seriously, a way of scanning the landscape to learn what was being written and what was being discussed. Writing reviews was for him another form of self-education, an equivalent to those marked-up books of his. It was also a way of continuing to grow as a reader, of searching for new writers to read and new things to say.

LIKE ANYONE who wrote reviews, my father also read reviews of his own work. He was not the sort of writer who claimed never to read notices of his books; he was too engaged, too polemical to remain that aloof. Some of these pieces, he would say, he could have written himself—especially those by his political opponents. Sometimes he would add, wickedly, he could have written them better. Attacks by old comrades who had changed their politics always angered him. These attacks seemed a kind of betrayal in their condescending insistence that he had yet to see the light that they—now ex-socialists creeping toward the right—had seen. And were so proud to have seen. Reviews of his literary books by academics that complained he was insensitive to the play of language or the pleasures of the text or that accused him of being a naïve, untheorized reader could also annoy him, but he had grown accustomed to them over the years. It was his fate, he knew, to be categorized as a political critic, and then it became his fate later in life to be ignored as a political critic when a theoretical and ahistorical Marxism returned as academic fashion. The reviews that pleased him most, beyond those (naturally enough) that agreed with his position or argument, were those that praised his writing as direct and lucid. And when that praise came from someone he admired as a writer, then it was all the more delicious.

Reading the prose from his first book, *Walter Reuther and the U.A.W.*, to the final essays in *A Critic's Notebook*, one feels an obvious loosening of pressure, a greater pleasure in the resources of the language. This change may have had something to do with his mellowing as a person, but it was also a way of continuing to struggle and even to grope to-

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ward a new sense of life. Good prose was not an absolute value in itself, but writing clearly and directly about even the most complex of topics spoke to a shared value of openness and respect for the reader. There was a vision of politics in such prose.

The shape of an intellectual's career is always more clearly marked in retrospect than it is in the present precisely because so much of his or her work is devoted to the moment. That is why the adjective "public" when placed before "intellectual" as a noun seems so needless. Who has ever heard of a private intellectual? To have been a voice that mattered for forty years and more in a nation's cultural and political life is a rare achievement. Rarer still is to have been such a voice on so many issues that some wondered if "Irving Howe" designated a syndicate rather than an individual. Reading through the reviews in this volume offers a vivid way to hear how that voice was heard during the second half of the twentieth century. And if reading these reviews sends some of our contemporaries back to the books themselves, then they will have done what reviews are meant to do. ●

NICHOLAS HOWE, professor of English at the University of California-Berkeley, edited Irving Howe's posthumous *A Critic's Notebook*.

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The Perils of Michael Moore

Political Criticism in an Age of Entertainment

Kevin Mattson

MICHAEL MOORE is probably America's most prominent leftist. People who have never read *Dissent* have probably seen Moore on primetime television (Fox, NBC, or Bravo) or in a movie cineplex (*Bowling for Columbine* most recently) or maybe purchased one of his best-selling books. Moore has busted through, as the saying goes, reaching a broad audience about such crucial issues as increased use of prison labor; botched urban renewal schemes; the temping of the workforce; and problems of welfare, violence, and racism. He has brought these issues into Americans' living rooms, espousing a CIO-style politics of social justice for the twenty-first century. Donning his signature baseball cap and scruffy clothes, Moore plays up his working-class persona as he shuffles into the citadels of power—while the cameras roll—in order to expose the darker side of the American Dream.

Moore's techniques are not new. He draws on a rich tradition of left-leaning political criticism. Think of Charlie Chaplin's tramp. Chaplin too was born poor, immersed himself in the cultural left of his time (Max Eastman was a close friend), and played the "forgotten man." Closer to Moore's own time, the New Left embraced "guerrilla theater" as a means of confronting power. Consider Abbie Hoffman and his Yippie brethren trying to levitate the Pentagon or throwing dollar bills onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange to mock capitalist greed. Add to Chaplin and Hoffman the news magazine tradition of Edward R. Murrow and *60 Minutes* (muckraking brought to television), mix in a heavy dose of postmodern irony, and you've pretty much got Michael Moore.

Moore has done something the left rarely does. He's made political criticism entertaining. And as polls show, Generation X and Y Americans get their news increasingly from entertainment shows—the hip irony of political jokes told on *The Late Show with David Letterman* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. Indeed, when Moore's *TV Nation* broadcast on NBC and Fox in 1994-1995, the demographic reports showed that a large number of the eighteen-to-thirty-four-year-old crowd was tuning in. Moore's success illustrates how young people are reached via satellite dishes and mega-mall bookstores rather than through cafés or union halls or small magazines. His merging of political criticism and entertainment tells us something about the state of the American left as it faces the media-saturated world of postmodern America.

Evolution of a Working-Class Critic

Moore got his start in "alternative" print media. Growing up in Flint, Michigan, he edited a small paper, the *Flint Voice* and then the *Michigan Voice*, which got him enough attention to land a job at *Mother Jones*. He moved to San Francisco, only to find himself embroiled in a series of disputes with fellow editors at the magazine. So Moore moved back to Flint just in time to witness the human dimension of "deindustrialization." He put aside print journalism for movies.

The result was *Roger and Me* (1989), Moore's first feature-length documentary. Here he chronicled the wreckage wrought by General Motors as it shut down several plants in Flint. Moore filmed a number of evictions throughout the town and showed workers moving from well-paid union employment to minimum-wage jobs at places like Taco Bell. Most famously, Moore depicted a woman who turned to selling rabbits as either "Pets or Meat." He exposed the power of social class, interview-

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ing wealthy Flint residents who, while playing golf at their country club, blamed workers for unemployment or hired unemployed factory workers as human statues for cocktail parties. He contrasted this with the populist rage of working-class people ranting about "fat cats." Yet while developing this concise morality play, Moore also embraced irony. He enjoyed depicting Flint's ridiculous race for urban renewal schemes, like the "Autoworld" theme park that flopped, and he ended the film by playing the Beach Boys' sweet song "Wouldn't It Be Nice" over scenes of dilapidated buildings in Flint.

Moore himself rarely appears in *Roger and Me*—except when he frantically pursues an interview with Roger Smith, CEO of General Motors. The fact that he never gets Smith to confront the problems of Flint (Smith refuses to visit Flint with Moore) suggests the state of the left during the late 1980s—angry and vocal but lacking political force. Moore gave voice to Reagan-era discontents, and his film did surprisingly well (winning prizes at numerous festivals). It also helped codify the features of Moore's future career: his use of visual imagery to dissect corporate America, confrontation as a means to get the attention of the powerful, and the honing of a working-class heroic persona trying to speak truth to power.

Success was his. Four years later, Moore made prime-time television with *TV Nation*, which first aired as a summer replacement series on NBC, then moved to Fox, and in the end won an Emmy for "Best Informational Series" in 1994 (though it was not renewed). In *TV Nation*, Moore's visage came front and center, his baseball cap, coat, and microphone symbolizing his readiness to go out into the cold world and confront corporate malfeasance. He poured his growing income into a feature-length fictional film, *Canadian Bacon* (1995), starring John Candy and Alan Alda. He also returned to print in *Downsize This!* (1997), a book that made it onto the best-seller lists, and then used his book tour as the basis for another documentary film, *The Big One* (1998). He then spun off *TV Nation* into the series *The Awful Truth* for the Bravo Channel. When that show wound down, he wrote *Stupid White Men* (2002), which after controversial wrangling with his publisher, went to the top of the best-seller list. Meanwhile, *Bowling For Columbine* (2002) hit the cineplexes, drawing large audiences.

The Politics of Confrontation

If Moore is known for anything, it is for walking into corporate offices, hunting down CEOs, and asking them to justify some business abuse —layoffs, say, or pollution. Confrontation seems to suit him, especially the sort that prompts humor. In one episode of *The Awful Truth*, he created a "Voice Box Chorus" made up of lung and throat cancer victims. He went to Philip Morris's headquarters, his chorus buzzing Christmas carols through tapped throats, and tried to find the CEO, only to be consigned to the lobby. Both *The Big One* and *Bowling for Columbine* culminate in confrontational interviews with powerful men—Phil Knight, the CEO of Nike, and Charlton Heston, president of the National Rifle Association (NRA).

Some reviewers are put off by Moore's aggressiveness. But what's really shocking is how often his technique fails. Sure, in *The Big One*, Moore got Knight to admit he employs fourteen year olds in Indonesia, and in *Bowling for Columbine*, Heston mumbles something about ethnic mixing producing violence in America (though the point isn't very clear). Nonetheless, both interviews illustrate the uselessness of confrontation more than its effectiveness. Heston simply walks away from Moore's pushy questioning; Knight grows aloof. When Moore proposes that Knight open a shoe factory in Flint rather than Indonesia, Knight refuses, saying, "Americans don't want to make shoes." Moore returns to show Knight video clips of Flint citizens demanding a shoe factory. Knight laughs nervously but doesn't budge. Moore challenges Knight to a foot race for a factory in Flint; Knight, not surprisingly, declines. Moore ends this final segment of his film by saying, "I know what most of you're thinking: I sure would have liked to have seen that foot race. Well, maybe next movie." Which, if I read him correctly, suggests that this confrontation has become a humorous bust—the problems of globalization remain while the audience awaits Moore's next bit of entertainment.

Moore's confrontational technique fails in

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more important ways, which speak to the marginalization of the left today. During an episode of *TV Nation*, Moore created a character, Crackers the Corporate Crime Fighting Chicken, who takes on business malfeasance. In his first appearance, Crackers learns that First Boston Bank received a tax break from New York City's government while promising no layoffs. Soon after the deal, the company fired numerous workers. So Moore takes Crackers with him to confront Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Not only was Crackers barred from City Hall (security reasons), but when Moore confronted the mayor, Giuliani refused to take his questions, saying Moore was "presenting" the issue as a "joke." The mayor explained that the matter was too serious for humor. Moore was stymied, seemingly dumbfounded, and when watching this, I was dumbfounded too, since the broadcast seemed to demonstrate that confrontation—especially when laced with humor—is too easy to sweep aside.

Often Moore can't get to the upper echelons of a corporation or government. Then he winds up confronting a security worker or desk clerk, as the cameras roll. In *The Big One*, for instance, he tried to get Payday candy bar company executives to discuss layoffs. Security guards push him out the door, and Moore gets persnickety, challenging and mocking them. And so in the name of confronting the powers that be, Moore winds up annoying underpaid security guards. The point of this, I would assume, was lost on many viewers, not just me.

THESE EXAMPLES might not matter; they could all be chalked up to a joke, except that Moore thinks of what he's doing as political. Here he inherits the New Left's conflation of "guerrilla theater" with politics. Unfortunately, confrontation is very often *not* political but emotional or melodramatic, inviting opponents to scoff at legitimate concerns. It rarely produces deliberation or reform. The historian Christopher Lasch argued that Abbie Hoffman's guerrilla theater "imprisoned the left in a politics of. . .dramatic gestures, or style without substance—a mirror image of the politics of unreality which it should have been the purpose of the left to unmask." Aimed at Moore's predecessor, this critique hits Moore too. Generating a humorous buzz doesn't shake things up so much as symbolize powerlessness.

Left-Wing Irrationality and Cynicism

Since he began making movies, reviewers have often documented Moore's errors. Some accused him of compressing history in *Roger and Me*, making events look like they caused one another when they didn't. More recently, *Bowling for Columbine* suggested that the two students who shot their fellow students had been in a bowling class at 6 a.m. that day. Police reports contradict this. The film's opening scene shows Moore walking into a bank and getting a free gun in return for setting up an account. "You think it's a little dangerous handing out guns in a bank?" Moore asks while raising a rifle to his shoulder. Apparently, this scene was staged; bank customers actually had to go to a separate gun shop for their rifle—bad enough, so why not tell it straight?

These complaints about Moore's work often have more to do with politics than a commitment to factual accuracy. It was *Forbes* magazine that documented the errors of *Bowling for Columbine*, and I doubt its editors show a similar interest in, say, the errors of Republican Party spokespeople. Besides, Moore's critics fail to recognize how much he gets right. In *Bowling for Columbine*, for instance, he depicts local news shows overplaying random acts of violence and thus sparking unwarranted fear. He shows the underbelly of welfare reform in which poorer workers are moving off the rolls into low-wage jobs. *TV Nation* documented depressed towns desperately recruiting new prisons as a means of economic revitalization and, in another episode, went after a wealthy Connecticut town that barred nonresidents from its beaches. In *The Awful Truth*, he portrayed fundamentalist protestors holding signs promising that "fags" will "burn in hell." Nothing factually wrong here.

It's not the inaccuracies that matter as much as Moore's techniques. After all, his chosen tools—imagery and entertainment—have distinct limitations. Explanation tends to blur as images, cuts, and rapid sequences take over. As reviewers have pointed out, the logic of *Bowling for Columbine* often fails. One example, not yet noted, symbolizes a central prob-

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lem in Moore's work. In trying to explain why Columbine happened, Moore floats the idea that Bill Clinton ordered a bombing in Sudan around the time of Columbine. He moves backward to show the violence endemic to American foreign policy, cutting and splicing together decontextualized images of America in Iran (1950s), Vietnam (1960s), Central America (1980s), and the Middle East (1990s). Clearly Moore was using this imagery to build up a sense of America as an inherently violent world power—arguing that America's violence is being turned against itself. If I followed his logic, he was also suggesting a specific link between American foreign policy and the Columbine killings. I admit to no knowledge of these particular students, but I find it hard to imagine they followed news about American action abroad, and I'm even surer they knew little about American intervention in Iran during the 1950s or even where Iran *was*. What I was left with were the decontextualized images Moore flung together in the hope that they would add up to a provocative point. But all I *really* had were decontextualized images.

When asked what he hopes to accomplish, Moore sometimes takes a dangerous position — blurring the line between political criticism and entertainment. His reasoning goes: Sure, I'm engaging political issues, but I'm also putting on a show. One critic, Ben Fritz, quotes him as saying, "I always assume that only 10 to 20 percent of people who read my books or see my films will take the facts and hard-core analysis and do something with it. If I can bring the other 80 percent to it through entertainment and comedy, then some of it will trickle through." Here's Moore's realism: reaching people in an age of entertainment requires entertaining them. A fine point, to a certain extent, but then we learn that this might require junking accuracy. For when asked on CNN about mistakes in *Stupid White Men*, he responded, "How can there be inaccuracy in comedy?" Here's Moore's problem: is he an entertainer, who aims at provoking laughter, or a political critic who has some responsibility to the truth? Of course, it might be unfair to blame Moore for blurring the line between news and entertainment, since that's become the norm today. The difficult question is how effective the left can be when it accepts the norm.

The critic Mark Crispin Miller has discussed the "hipness unto death" and ironic detachment prominent among television watchers. As television deflates, the viewer wants to avoid being conned, thus rejecting *anyone*'s claim to truth and embracing cynicism instead. Think of early shows in this vein such as *Beavis and Butthead*, where the viewer both laughs *at* and *with* the stupid antics of two young critics of MTV videos, or Fox's signature show, *Married with Children*, with its cynical take on the American family, or Jerry Seinfeld's smirk. Think of Sprite's advertisements condemning "image." Irony and cynicism have become the norm of our postmodern culture, and Moore seems comfortable here. In one of his last episodes of *The Awful Truth*, he ran a fake ad for the "Michael Moore Play Set," replete with a Moore mask, microphone, and a bald wig for a friend to wear in order to play a business CEO. While kids play with the set, the narrator points out that Moore has become filthy rich from his TV shows, movies, and books (a point critics never fail to point out). Moore just chuckles.

ONE OF HIS LEAST discussed projects, *Canadian Bacon*, captures the depth of his cynicism. Moore was writer, producer, and director of this fictional movie that's intended as political commentary. Like Stanley Kubrick in the classic *Dr. Strangelove,* Moore takes on the cold war, now from retrospect. The film views the cold war as a prop for the American economy, elaborating on the peace movement's criticism of the warfare-welfare state. The president is a liberal (played by Alan Alda), blaming the "penny pinching wimps" in D.C. for not pumping up the economy after the fall of the Soviet Union. The president's macho National Security Adviser pushes him to seek a new enemy to replace the Soviet Union and get the warfare state up and running again. The adviser suggests Canada. When the president balks, the advisor blurts out, "The American people will buy whatever we tell them to; you know that." Unlike the ineffective and Adlai Stevenson-like president in *Dr. Strangelove*, who at least protests the misbehaviors of generals in the war room, the liberal president here caves in to his reaction-

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ary adviser and rushes into a conflict with Canada. So, the movie reasons, not only is American foreign policy a slave to domestic economic slumps and unfounded animosities, but even liberals don't have the guts to oppose any of this.

Moore's cynicism seems to conflict with his hopes for political change. And here he joins a major tendency in contemporary left-wing political criticism. Moore is one of the loudest to argue there is no difference between the Republican and Democratic parties. So in *Downsize This!*, Moore coins the word Republicrats (a mantra among Naderites) and rips quotes out of context to make Democrats sound anti-liberal. He lambastes Ted Kennedy for arguing against open immigration and then contrasts his statement with pro-immigration statements of Newt Gingrich and then-governor of Texas George W. Bush. This is, of course, a far more complex issue than Moore acknowledges. But no matter, because his major point is that Democrats are as bad—or worse!—than Republicans. In *Stupid White Men*, Moore argues that "the choice between Bush's 'compassionate conservatism' and Clintonism is no more meaningful than the choice between castor oil and cherry-flavored Robitussin." This sounds odd coming from a man who spent a great deal of time and energy defending Clinton from the right's impeachment attack. How can Moore square cynicism and effective political engagement? Not much better than anyone else. He makes the general left-leaning error of misreading cynicism about politics as thoughtful critique.

Moore's Anti-Politics

Certainly Moore wants to change things. He urges political action sometimes—publishing the telephone numbers of politicians, for example, in *Stupid White Men*. He also believes in the muckraking ethic that exposure can induce reform. On occasion, Moore will praise the labor movement (though in general, he criticizes its conservatism). In *Bowling for Columbine*, he showed anti-NRA protestors, suggesting a burgeoning movement among middle-class people against the gun industry. But the parent of a student killed at Columbine and a leader in anti-NRA protests may be right to describe Moore as "just a guy trying to capitalize on the tragedy of others." The remark is troubling; is Moore more interested in entertainment than social change? Structurally, Moore centers his films and television shows around his own activity—not the political action of other people. Ultimately, he is strangely apolitical, incapable of transcending the limits of the entertainment industry.

Take *Bowling for Columbine*, which documents a political triumph. Moore joins two victims of the Columbine shooting to press K-Mart to stop selling the sort of bullets used at Columbine. In one scene, Moore pleads with a K-Mart spokesperson, who hesitates to take the students seriously, explaining that he promised something would happen if the students took action. This is a touching scene; Moore's plea is almost a paean to civic engagement. In the end, Moore and his two students get what they want; K-Mart announces it will stop selling the bullets. Moore appears genuinely happy and even a bit surprised in the face of this announcement. Could this offer a new form of activism and political change? Armed with nothing more than a movie camera, Moore shames a corporation into making a moral decision.

What's odd about this sort of engagement, though, is that it avoids the hard work of forming movements that could press for change. No need for that when Michael Moore, with just his camera, microphone, and baseball cap, can come to the rescue. Acting as the lone fighter for social justice, Moore reminds us that there are few movements at work on the array of issues he grapples with. When, in one episode of *The Awful Truth*, he helps someone challenge an inhumane Health Maintenance Organization decision, we can't help remember that though there is plenty of anger at HMOs today, there's no organized movement for health care reform. When Moore documents increased use of prison labor, we confront the fact that, except for a weak labor movement, no one is out there fighting prison labor. If we add to this Moore's own self-expressed cynicism about the state of American politics, we are faced with our central predicament: the left today is armed with anger but no political solutions or realistic tactics for long-term change.

Think back to Edward R. Murrow's famous

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television broadcast "Harvest of Shame" (1960). The show documented the plight of migrant farm workers through interviews with poor families explaining their toil and an American Farm Bureau Federation representative making sloppy excuses for their poverty. It's not hard to watch the show and imagine how it must have worked in tandem with Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and the initiatives of labor unions and community organizers to help energize LBJ's "Great Society." Murrow insisted that CBS allow him to include a final plea for political change, where he argues that only an "enlightened" and "aroused public opinion" can solve the documented injustices.

Comparing "Harvest of Shame" to Moore's efforts illustrates a sea change in the mass media and the state of American politics. "Harvest of Shame" doesn't have a drop of irony. Murrow was a moralist, in the best sense of that term. He knew that for things to change, people had to care enough to defend the interests of those too poor and weak to speak for themselves. That's what makes "Harvest of Shame" seem so entirely dated today. Its moral symbolism is overwrought. There are constant comparisons between the way Americans treat animals—including waterfowl or horses—and the way they treat the poor. At one moment, a narrator calls the show "a 1960s *Grapes of Wrath*." For Murrow, injustice did not lend itself to humor or irony; the viewer is not to laugh but get indignant and ready for battle. The postmodern media sap Murrow's politically charged and moralistic approach. There's nothing funny or entertaining about his outdated puritanism. Moore fills that void.

Our Moorean Dilemma

In criticizing Moore, it's hard not to sound like sour grapes. Moore's defenders will claim I'm jealous because I lack a camera and large audience and my views are consigned to small magazines. I grant the point. Moore has expended a great deal of energy and time to ensure his views reach a wide audience. For that, he deserves respect. My point is simply that he's paid a price in the process of getting heard. Here is what I would call the Moorean dilemma: do leftists stay on the margins or do we bust through and play by the rules of the entertainment industry? I am not against humor (ask my friends). But I am worried about what happens to the vision of the left when it plays on the grounds of the soundbite society.

None of what I've discussed here would matter if Moore's techniques didn't symbolize bigger weaknesses in the American left today. Moore is not just a quirky guy with enough talent and dough to reach a wide audience. His political criticism signals problems faced by the left more generally: marginalization, a tendency to seek the purity of confrontation rather than to work for long-term political solutions, a cynicism about the possibilities of politics today, and questionable political judgments. Moore exhibits all these weaknesses. Unfortunately, an effective left cannot draw energy or inspiration from a deeply cynical view of politics that blurs entertainment and argument. Moore takes short-cuts when it comes to politics. He entertains, but he doesn't always do much more. That speaks to the state of the left; we are angry and sometimes vocal, but we have too little to offer those looking for or needing social change. Meanwhile, the entertainment industry chugs on, denigrating serious political argument and avoiding deliberation. That is the depressing world Michael Moore has broken into. ●

KEVIN MATTSON teaches American history at Ohio University. He has written *Intellectuals in Action* and co-edited *Steal This University: The Rise of the Corporate University and the Academic Labor Movement*.

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The 'Buffy Paradigm' Revisited

A Superhero and the War on Terror

Maxine Phillips

It was a hard sell to my colleagues when I tried to convince them that the teen social satire show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was mocking the War on Terror. What else could one think when, in a recent episode, command central in London is blown up right after the chief of staff assures a nervous subordinate, "We are the masters of our fate, the captains of our souls." Little did I know that in real life anti-terrorism strategists were pointing to *Buffy* as an example of what *not* to do. Just three weeks after 9/11, a forty-two-page report by Anthony H. Cordesman on "Biological Warfare and the 'Buffy Paradigm'" was issued by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

Cordesman, a former director of intelligence assessment in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and author of more than twenty books dealing with war, terrorism, and defense, provided an analysis that was mostly on target. I wondered, though, whether he, who clearly was not a dedicated fan, hadn't missed some deeper lessons, hadn't dug deep enough for a viable terror-fighting paradigm. After all, Buffy may not have won her war on terrorism, but she hadn't lost it, either.

If you're over twenty-five, or don't have teenagers in the house, or missed the stories in the right, left, and mainstream press about this series, you might not know that Buffy is the "chosen one," the person in this generation who will save the world from a terrible axis of evil that operates from a "Hellmouth" under Sunnydale High School in southern California. Season after season, she and her friends stave off the Apocalypse, slaying armies of vampires and demons that threaten to obliterate them and all of civilization. The mainstream press loves the smart writing, character development, and satire of teen angst; the right deplores the sex and violence, the lesbian subplot, and the heavy emphasis on the occult; the left thrills to all of the above, plus the strong feminism and critique of consumer capitalism (one particularly gripping episode has Buffy rallying fellow slave laborers with a plea for solidarity, then using a hammer and sickle to free all the teenagers trapped in a factory in a hell dimension). In 2002, the show was hailed in *Christianity Today* as "one of TV's most socially relevant and well-crafted hours," and Buffy was named "Theologian of the Year" by the Christian satirical magazine *The Door*. This show takes moral issues seriously. It's not only about fighting evil, it's about how to fight evil and hold on to your humanity. (This may not seem like a big deal, but in a show where half the cast are either the soul-less undead or demons, it is.)

And it is in the moral arena that Cordesman could have offered the government even better advice than he did.

What Is the Buffy Paradigm?

Although Cordesman noted that Buffy deals with existential questions, his main point about the Buffy Paradigm is that the vampire slayer "lives in a world of unpredictable threats where each series of crises only becomes predictable when it is over and is followed by a new and unfamiliar one." Some other elements of the paradigm are

- What expertise there is consists largely of bad or uncertain advice and old, flawed, and confusing technical data.
- The importance of any given threat changes constantly, past threat behavior does not predict future behavior, and methods of delivery keep changing.
- It is never clear whether the threat is internal, from an individual, or from an outside organization.

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- All efforts at planning a coherent strategy collapse in the face of tactical necessity and the need to deal with unexpected facts on the ground.
- The balance between external defense, homeland defense, and response changes constantly.
- No success, no matter how important at the time, ever eliminates the risk of future problems.*

Living with this level of uncertainty (which many reviewers have noted applies to teenage existence), how do the characters respond? In Cordesman's view, they are stymied by the "Buffy Syndrome," in which they "never really face the level of uncertainty they must deal with," in fact, in which "they behave as if they could create and live with the kind of strategy and doctrine that is typically developed by the U.S. joint chiefs . . ."

A Different Interpretation

Cordesman, who was, after all, writing a chilling paper on our country's unpreparedness for biological warfare, not a review of *Buffy*, did not mention that one of the wild cards for Buffy often is the government. There was a whole season, pre-9/11, in which Buffy had to fight on two fronts: against the terror of vampires and demons and against the multimillion dollar, government-sponsored Initiative created to neutralize vampire populations. While Buffy and her friends were staking dozens of vamps in the time-honored way, the Initiative had captured a few to conduct experiments. But the biggest experiment was the head scientist's attempt to create a perfect fighting machine, named Adam, who turned into a brilliant killer wreaking havoc far surpassing any done by supernatural beings. In fact, Adam almost succeeded in uniting the terrorists for a combined assault on humanity before Buffy did him in. Then there was the season during which the mayor of Sunnydale, who had sold his soul for eternal life, tried to gain world dominance.

In an uncertain world, Buffy and friends cling to certain beliefs. These beliefs lead me to suggest a different Buffy Paradigm:

- Stick with your friends. Although Buffy is always tempted to go it alone because she's the chosen one with superpowers, she only succeeds with the help of her allies.
- Everyone's motives are suspect. The forces of the state should be arrayed against the forces of evil, but the state often benefits from actions by evildoers in order to enrich or bring glory to its leaders.
- High-tech solutions never work. Nothing substitutes for information-gathering, field research, and understanding the enemy.
- Cross moral boundaries at great peril. Whenever a sympathetic character kills a human being, he or she pays, no matter how "justifiable" the killing may appear to be.
- Power corrupts. No matter how effective immoral means can be (usually over-the-top witchcraft), they always backfire.

The corollary "syndrome" is that all of the characters, especially Buffy, feel "called" to their work. Buffy struggles constantly with feelings of superiority as savior of the world. She knows that she carries a great responsibility, and though there are many, many times when she would rather give it up and go shopping, she loves being the center of attention. Because of her calling, her relationships with friends and family suffer and her finances are a mess.

Being a superhero isn't easy. *Buffy* is now in its seventh, perhaps final, season. Only the writers know whether this year, one in which primal evil (as opposed to plain old evil) has been unleashed, the Apocalypse will finally happen.

The Bush administration, al-Qaeda, Saddam Hussein, and a cast of millions, working with much less competent script writers, wonder about the same thing. ●

MAXINE PHILLIPS is a *Buffy* fan.

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Confessions of an 'Anti-American'

Michael Wreszin

FOR THE LAST several issues, the thrust of *Dissent* has been increasingly hard to take. It reminds me of the early years of the Vietnam War era, when some *Dissent* editors apparently thought the New Left was a greater menace than the Johnson administration's war policy. Surely we don't need instructions from Michael Kazin, Mitchell Cohen, and Michael Walzer on how to be a "decent left." Major bookstores are flooded with patriotic Americanism from Daniel J. Flynn's *Why the Left Hates America*, Sean Hannity's *Let Freedom Ring: Winning the War of Liberty over Liberalism*, Chris Matthews's *America Beyond Our Grandest Dreams* to Stephen Ambrose's *To America: Personal Reflections of an Historian*. David Corn, the Washington editor of the *Nation*, attacks the organizers of the October 26, 2002, march on Washington as kooky sectarians and seems unimpressed that they managed to mobilize more than a hundred thousand antiwar protesters across the spectrum. With all of this going on, *Dissent* informs us that we should speak "patriotically to our fellow citizens."

With the Bush regime pursuing increasingly dangerous policies at home and abroad (acknowledged by *Dissent*), it seems a political mistake to spend time attacking the minuscule sectarian left's critique of the administration and the government's foreign policy. Surely the "anti-American" left, as it is so frequently described in *Dissent*'s pages, is not the real menace facing the country. And yet, Michael Kazin, an articulate liberal, feels compelled to call for "A Patriotic Left" (Fall 2002). After an initial obligatory declaration of his love of country ("I am not now and have never been . . ."), Kazin indicts Katha Pollitt, one of our more informed writers, for her rejection of the current flag wavers. He denounces her as ignorant of American history because she insists on a global vision rather than a chauvinistic one. He cites Noam Chomsky as ignorant of history because he "describes patriotic blather as simply the governing elite's way of telling its subjects, 'You shut up and be obedient, and I'll relentlessly advance my own interests.'" Surely Chomsky's is a sensible observation. Perhaps Kazin, as well as several of the editors and contributors to the magazine, should return to the writings of Mark Twain, whose credentials as an American were frequently challenged because of his opposition to American and British imperialism. As for patriotism, Twain referred to it in 1908 as that "grotesque and laughable word."

In his survey of patriotic statements by dissenting Americans, Kazin omits both Twain and Henry David Thoreau, who asked rhetorically, in his essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," "How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today?" He answered that he could not "without disgrace be associated with it." These omissions indicate sophistication of historical selection but not historical intelligence. Kazin argues that "without patriotic appeals, the great social movements that attacked inequalities of class, gender, and race . . . would never have gotten off the ground." If Kazin believes demanding that the American deed live up to the American creed is patriotism, then who does he think fails to qualify as patriotic? Most serious critics of American society do just what he demands. Martin Luther King, Jr., always claimed that he criticized America because he loved the country and wanted it to live up to its ideals. Must one display the flag before criticizing one's country or engaging in a protest? To do so is often a ploy used by soap box orators of the left and right to legitimize their positions. It has absolutely no relationship to the

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validity of their positions. Kazin is obviously aware that Bush, Ashcroft, & Company represent, as he puts it "the greed and arrogance" that betray "the apotheosis of democratic strivings." But why are Kazin, Cohen, Walzer, and an articulate and intelligent contributor like Jeffrey Isaac so obsessed with those critics on the left who stress the hypocrisy of governmental rhetoric and point out the gap between creed and deed? Kazin himself appears to have been intimidated by the increasingly strident nationalism in the country. He even feared that Walzer would see his criticism of American foreign policy as appeasement. This only further illustrates how the chorus of nationalistic hysteria is making critics of the "war on terror" appear, in the words of Randolph Bourne, "disreputable and finally almost obscene." Walzer has already claimed that a good portion of the critical anti-war left is "indecent" ("Can There Be a Decent Left?" Spring 2002).

I believe that this government opposes much of what I think this country represents and what I believe to be its ideals. Kazin summons up the phrases of Frederick Douglass, Eugene Debs, and Martin Luther King, Jr., as dissenters who did not eschew patriotism, but he ignores William Lloyd Garrison, who was one of the first flag burners. Surely these are times that call for outrage. We need what Dwight Macdonald termed, "specialists in abuse, technicians in vilification, expert mud slingers" who speak out against the "rationalized lunacy" of the governmental war party. We don't need a "patriotic" wing of the so-called "left" attacking another more critical wing as lacking in moral intelligence. There are plenty of people ready to do that. Instead, we should now be in the streets. The Old Left and the Late Left have attacked the New Left for their unreasonableness, but in fact the New Left did more than its goading critics did to end a war, much more, I might add, than *Dissent*. What we need to do now is stop a war from starting.

Kazin can't think of any radical or reformer who repudiated the national belief system and had a major impact on U.S. politics. Nor can I think of any today. Is he suggesting that Noam Chomsky, Alexander Cockburn, Edward Said, or Howard Zinn have renounced our democratic ideals? Kazin, along with Walzer and other *Dissent* editors, parades an army of straw men to denounce an unidentified and undefined "left." It's "most leftists" this and "left academics" that. They offer little evidence of such a repudiation. Howard Zinn, a representative of what is often described in *Dissent*'s pages as the unthinking, knee-jerk left, has disavowed a patriotism that demands conformity and acceptance. He has embraced a patriotism loyal to the principles of justice and democracy, a patriotism that requires us to disobey our government when it violates those principles. In a slippery way, Kazin contrasts the liberal, patriotic leadership of King to that of the Weathermen or Abbie Hoffman. He chooses them because the Weathermen were violent and self-destructive and Hoffman was seen as a high-jinx radical. A more reasonable contrast would have been with Dave Dellinger, A.J. Muste, Staughton Lynd, and even Norman Thomas. Those pacifists and semi-pacifists, those nonviolent and peaceful demonstrators created the movement that the liberals later latched onto. (Most of them opposed the Vietnam War long before the editors of *Dissent*.) Kazin sounds like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who invariably dismissed the influence of antiwar protestors. That's OK — but not in *Dissent*! We don't need the argument that true change can come only from patriotic moderates such as those writing for *Dissent*. Certainly they understand that King needed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Malcolm X to make his own position persuasive.

MICHAEL WALZER'S essay on whether a "decent left" is possible in a superpower is unclear as to who and what constitute his "left." At one point he admits that "there has been much to criticize in the policies of every U.S. government since the Second World War (see almost any back issue of *Dissent*)." But then, he remarks that the "leftist critique . . . from the Vietnam years forward (from the time of 'Amerika,' Viet Cong flags, and breathless trips to North Vietnam)— has been stupid, overwrought, grossly inaccurate." There must be two lefts here. Apparently the decent one is Walzer's and the indecent his opponents'. Talk about predictable, knee-jerk, ideological rigidity! Walzer is defending the

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sorry history of *Dissent*'s weaseling on the Vietnam War and smearing the anti–Vietnam War movement by summoning up the Vietcong flag wavers. Is this déjà vu all over again? It's this misplaced focus that is so disturbing.

If Walzer seldom defines "the left," neither he nor Kazin defines patriotism, and both fail to distinguish it from nationalism. They would do well to read one of the journal's most articulate contributors, Ellen Willis, who points to the "problematic" aspect of patriotism that demands an a priori loyalty to the nation. She, too, speaks out for cosmopolitanism. Is she, in Cohen's words, one of those "leftists who never learn" ("Empire of Cant," Summer 2002)? To argue that the contemporary left has "abandoned patriotism" and "hates" America is not nuanced political analysis. One expects these smears from the *New Republic*, *Commentary*, the *New Criterion* and so forth, but in *Dissent*? Because I think much of what is going on in this country at the moment is criminal, does that make me hate my country?

THERE IS A good deal of political pragmatism (sometimes called political realism) in the *Dissent* community. Because Kazin and others do not see a global community on the horizon, they characterize those who hope and work for one as deluded in their refusal to face up to the real world of power and join the "overwhelming majority" of the nationalist community. From a cultural point of view they should recall the cosmopolitanism that was so much a part of the early *Dissent* worldview. Kazin asks, "How can one seriously engage in this conversation about protecting America if America holds no privileged place in one's heart." What does he mean by "holding a privileged place in one's heart?" Does he mean the present government or the shore line of Cape Cod, or one's neighborhood in New York, or a diner on Route 66? There are plenty of privileged places in my heart, but they have little to do with an argument tolerating an American-led regime change in Iraq. I want a regime change at home.

Kazin wants the left to communicate with the average American in a politically tactical matter. Anyone seriously engaged in activist politics wants to develop a constituency and see it grow. But did Kazin expect King to communicate with the average white citizen in racist Mississippi and Cicero, Illinois? Did he think King had abandoned patriotism or hated America when he said that the American government was "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today" and that the government "had no honorable intentions"? Does Kazin consider these unpatriotic statements? King was attacked then as a traitor, as hating America. Is this the position of Michael Kazin? I think not. King was not trying to cozy up to the "overwhelming majority." Nor should we. Kazin may be for a kind of intellectual populism, what he once described as Wilmore Kendall's "always virtuous American majority," but those Americans—Richard Nixon's silent majority and Pat Robinson's moral majority—are seldom allies in a war against imperialism, racism, sexism, and inequality. If you "fight like hell" to change this country, you are not likely to find that the "overwhelming majority" of Americans is with you.

When Dwight Macdonald was described as being a "good American" he challenged the accuracy of the statement and went on to say that "patriotism [had] never been one of [his] strong suits." From the offices of the White House to the chambers of the Congress, we now hear the demands that Americans speak with one voice. If that should happen, all is lost. Walzer, among others, decries the "indecent" left's lack of sympathy for the victims of terrorist attacks. There is something drastically wrong with a political analysis that judges whether one has shown enough concern for the victims. I love New York, and my city was attacked, and I was shocked and saddened. I don't need political commentators to tell me what and how to feel or how to express those feelings. Were Walzer, Cohen, Isaac, and Kazin upset because, soon after the catastrophe, Alexander Cockburn was incensed that Bush called the hijackers cowards? Who cares? The point of Cockburn's critique was to attack the dangerous simplicity of Bush & Company, who think that calling the enemy "evil" relieves Americans of responsibility for analyzing the event and even of having to think. My problem is to gauge how much more dedicated and lethal the terrorist plotters are than Bush & Company. The United States has

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a hell of a lot more capability to wreak havoc than the 9/11 hijackers. And if the current warmongers have their way, it will.

THE PROBLEM is not a matter of patriotism, it is a question of what constitutes the best way to defend the nation against terrorist attacks. The co-editors and such contributors as Kazin and Isaac see themselves as sophisticated practitioners of a "morally nuanced politics" sensitive to complexity. They see their critics as "leftists who can't learn," who have little appreciation of the terrible differences in the current situation as compared with the past. They repeatedly argue that "the leftists" don't address the crucial question of what is to be done to protect the nation against terrorism. I don't believe this is true. Chomsky has referred to "the horrifying criminal assault," he has identified with the "unanimous sympathy for the victims." And, he has repeatedly argued that the hijackers of 9/11 should be treated as criminals and hunted down as such. He has voiced arguments similar to those expressed by Sir Michael Howard and Stanley Hoffmann. Terrorism should be fought as a crime against the innocent, just as organized crime is at home. Chomsky has agreed with Hoffmann that the instruments of the police and counterintelligence are likely to be far more effective than military operations. This would include patient collection of information, the silent penetration of cells, the cutting off of financial support, and the dismantling of the communications used by the networks. The point of the antiwar critics is that the "campaign" against terrorism should be a multilateral operation and that it should bring criminals before an international court. And incidentally, many think a change in American foreign policy, particularly concerning the unqualified support of the Israeli government, is essential. While *Dissent* continues to smear leftist opponents as being without compassion or intelligence, its writers seem oblivious to the indirect support the journal is giving to the powers that be.

I have been a subscriber to *Dissent* on and off since its beginning, and I can still recall Irving Howe's piece in the *Partisan Review* in the winter of 1954 on the "Age of Conformity." It was a lament for the acquiescence of intellectuals in accepting much of the rampant nationalism, even patriotism of that time. He reminded his readers that the glorious vision of intellectual life was a "readiness to stand alone" and to nourish a healthy skepticism: "The banner of critical independence, ragged and torn though it may be, is still the best we have." With others, Howe went on to establish *Dissent*. A decade ago, Mitchell Cohen put together an attractive anthology of great political stories entitled *Rebels and Reactionaries*. In the introduction he declared that "asking questions that Power prefers to avoid is perhaps one of the essential political functions that political literature can play." It's time to return to the initial vision of obligation that launched and sustained the journal. ●

MICHAEL WRESZIN is professor emeritus of Queens College and the Graduate Center of The City University of New York. He is the biographer of Dwight Macdonald.

To Our Contributors

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your manuscript. And please remember that we can't consider articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article. We will not consider manuscripts submitted simultaneously to several publications.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility. Please use inclusive language so that we don't have to make adjustments during editing. If you are submitting to *Dissent* electronically, our e-mail address is editors@dissentmagazine.org.

(4) Notes and footnotes should also be typed double-spaced, on a *separate* sheet. As we're not an academic journal, we prefer that they, wherever possible, be dropped altogether or worked into the text.

(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

THE EDITORS

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Michael Kazin Responds

THIS IS A DEFINING moment for the American left. As Michael Wreszin, a distinguished historian, is well aware, reform and radical movements always get transformed in the crucible of war. The Civil War turned abolitionists into militant Republicans, World War I destroyed the dream of a unified social democracy, and the Vietnam War turned the tiny New Left into a mass insurgency—but one that few wage-earning Americans chose to follow.

The battle against terrorism and what, at this writing, appears to be an imminent war with Iraq have already caused a serious rift on the left—which is, alas, a smaller creature than its ancestors. And the ongoing crisis may further widen the split. On one side are voices like Wreszin's, whose anger at George W. Bush and his fellow "warmongers" far outweighs his disgust at anything al-Qaeda or Saddam Hussein have done. On the other side sit, among others, some of the more loquacious editors of this magazine who believe the United States should battle terrorism and encourage democracy in the world but don't trust the current administration to carry out those mighty, laudable tasks. One side trains all its outrage against those who rule from the White House and Capitol Hill; the other believes tyrants and mass murderers must be quelled if one hopes to build a humane world.

The question of patriotism is bound up with this ongoing debate. Wreszin thinks it's "sensible" to dismiss love of country as a ruling-class smokescreen, yet still believes in "the American creed," although he doesn't stop to define it. Doesn't he realize the latter assertion contradicts the former one? To engage in politics on behalf of national ideals is to practice one's patriotism in a principled manner that most Americans can understand. To mock that belief system implies that one's fellow citizens—including those who carry placards reading "Peace is Patriotic"—are fools.

This is a matter not of obligation but of solidarity and common sense. Wreszin forgets a basic adage of politics—study your opponents' successes. If 9/11 had never happened, the regime of Bush II would resemble the second coming of the Harding administration—as an attractive, genial president with an unremarkable mind surrounded by corporate scoundrels. But the president's defense of "freedom" against the "evil" of terrorism instantly transformed him into a militant idealist, fighting to defend his fellow Americans. Leftists who ridiculed this stance as nothing but self-serving cant made little headway in public opinion—and made themselves an easy target for the likes of Andrew Sullivan and Rush Limbaugh. Only when Bush's image switched from that of defender of ordinary Americans into the bully of the world did an antiwar movement begin to grow at home.

To me, the lessons of these events are clear. A left that followed Wreszin's lead would continue to be essentially what it was in the months right after the minions of Osama bin Laden smashed into our lives: a movement of bitter iconoclasts and moral cynics of whom Noam Chomsky is the most prolific and popular example. This kind of left would represent only a small minority of citizens, from now until the distant future. Its only real task would be to protest against an evil empire whose sole redeeming feature is that it usually allows dissenters to speak and publish.

The alternative would be a movement of liberals and radicals who believe they can make political headway by embracing and seeking to apply ideals—democracy, civil liberties, social equality—that most Americans share. This movement would avoid telling one-sided truths about who, in the world, betrays those principles. It would not choose between condemning Bush's imperial designs and Saddam's sadistic dictatorship but would make clear how each abets the other.

"I criticize America because I love her," explained Martin Luther King, Jr., when he spoke out against the Vietnam War. He chose not to pillory New Leftists, as did most *Dissent* editors at the time, for sometimes sounding like they hated the same country they wanted to change. But he agreed with Irving Howe and his colleagues that communism was only a symptom of what ailed the developing world; its penchant for violence and contempt for democracy could never solve the problems of pov-

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erty and injustice.

The enemy that American troops may now be fighting lacks any of the virtues that once led me and other young radicals into the mistake of romanticizing Vietnamese revolutionaries. The latter were at least attempting to liberate their nation from a foreign army and to gain a better lot for the poor. But a ruler who emulates Stalin and terrorists who long for the Caliphate traffic only in mass delusions and massive cruelty. If the current antiwar movement fails to condemn such figures and scorns the very notion of patriotism, it will only ensure its isolation from other Americans. In so doing, it would waste a fine opportunity to propose a serious alternative to Bush's arrogant, blundering policies—and to renew a left that, for three decades, has lacked the energy and hope that only a unifying moral vision can provide. That would indeed be hard to take. ●

MICHAEL KAZIN's latest book, co-authored with Maurice Isserman, is *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*.

Michael Walzer

A QUICK WORD from a third Michael. I agree entirely with the second Michael's response to the first, but want to add a few comments as co-editor of *Dissent*. Instead of arguing about the state of the left, Michael Wreszin writes, "We should now be in the streets." But there he sits banging away at his computer, and banging away, and banging away. And he is right; we should be arguing about what ought to be done, and how to do it, *before* we rush into the streets. That's what we do; that's why we run a magazine; and that's why we are happy to print Wreszin's response to some recent *Dissent* articles.

It's a curious response. He berates us for being exactly like the old *Dissent*, which wasn't heated enough in its opposition to the Vietnam War (there were disagreements among the editors then too); and he berates us for not being enough like the old *Dissent* and asks us "to return to its initial vision." Is that really what he wants? When *Dissent* was founded, in 1954, Wreszin's counterparts were equally sharp, though perhaps less rhetorical, in condemning its "initial vision," which entailed a sustained critique of the existing American left. We are still in the same business. It's not our only business. Mostly, as Wreszin knows, we print harshly critical pieces on American politics and society. But we want to get the criticism right, and we want it to be effective; we want to be usefully engaged with our fellow citizens. And that sometimes requires us to criticize people who get American politics and society wrong and who do not display a "decent respect" for the opinions of other Americans.

Wreszin doesn't say much in the way of substantive argument. But he does defend one (in my opinion, bad) left response to 9/11: "the hijackers . . . should be treated as criminals and hunted down as such." They should be fought "just as organized crime is [fought] at home." This is the dial 911 answer to 9/11. "We've been attacked. Call the cops!" And the critique that I made of this response in *Dissent* last year ("Five Questions About Terrorism," Winter 2002) is that it involves the pretense that international society is just like domestic society. There is, indeed, an old left view that international society should be, and one day will be, just like domestic society. But right now it plainly isn't. There were no police that we could summon up to deal, say, with terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. Pretending that the police were just waiting to be called was a way of opposing the Afghan War, but was it a serious way? Of course, police work by many different (and differently competent) national police forces is an important part of our response to 9/11. But it could never have been the whole story. Wreszin gives no sign of having thought much, no sign of having worried at all, about how to fight against internationally organized terrorist movements.

When he writes as he has written here, how can he expect his fellow citizens to believe that he is concerned about their safety? ●

MICHAEL WALZER is co-editor of *Dissent*.

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The Audacious Humility Of John Rawls

David Estlund

HARVARD PHILOSOPHER John Rawls's name is not a household word, but it is unusually well-known around universities. Students often assume he must have been dead for many years, like the other great philosophers. A student told me that he and some Harvard friends once looked up the name in the phone book, and called to ask Mrs. Rawls about her great deceased (so they assumed) husband. Mard Rawls simply put John Rawls on the line. In truth, John Rawls died just a few months ago, November 24, 2002.

Rawls is being remembered as the greatest political philosopher of the twentieth century. This might be surprising if one thought only about the conventional politics that he defended. In his most famous book, *A Theory of Justice*, he attempted to find a widely acceptable moral basis for two broad kinds of social and political institutions. First, he argued for the non-negotiable importance of a familiar list of equal basic liberties. These include freedom of expression, religion, conscience, property, and political participation. In our political culture, this is a standard list of valuable liberties, even across party lines. Second, he argued that justice requires arranging society so that the poorest citizens will be kept as well-off as possible. This approach to justice is certainly controversial, but, apart from some innovative details in Rawls's version, it is not a new idea. It resembles the traditional views of many liberal Democrats.

So why did *A Theory of Justice* turn the world of moral and political philosophy on its ear? In one common explanation, the book appeared in 1971, when college life was feeling, well, academic—disconnected from urgent matters of gender, race, and war. Rawls's approach to political philosophy turned away from the academically fashionable view that philosophy was limited to logical and conceptual clarification. He confronted the great question of social justice head-on, striking a chord with activists who were fighting against the sterility of academe.

But there is a puzzle about this story, this emphasis on Rawls's direct engagement with moral issues. When the book came out students and faculty were clamoring for "relevance" in their studies. It is true that *A Theory of Justice* was less sterile than most philosophy (written in English) of the preceding decades. On the other hand, Rawls himself studiously avoided joining the controversies that rocked American society in the 1960s. His defense of civil disobedience and conscientious refusal to obey certain laws was an exception; even there, he never said how these principles applied to current events. The book (unlike the man, I'm told) said nothing directly about the current civil rights controversies, or about the Vietnam War (the book was mostly finished by the time Vietnam sent students into the streets), or about feminism. And yet intellectuals moved by those events were galvanized by the idea that questions of social justice might be situated in such a broad and deep philosophical account, supported by powerful arguments drawing on the whole Western philosophical tradition from Socrates through Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Mill. The puzzle is this: how did such an abstract and learned treatment of the idea of social justice meet the needs of that turbulent and impatient time? I think the answer takes us to the heart of Rawls's approach to philosophy, an approach that informs his work from beginning to end.

From his very earliest writing, Rawls wondered whether the contenders in certain reasonable but intractable controversies could be brought to see that they shared many impor-

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tant assumptions. If they could, then they might pursue their differences more productively on that common basis. At the beginning, the controversies he tried to steer around were esoteric philosophical disputes about the nature and knowability of moral claims in general. (Are all moral claims merely subjective in some way? Is there a moral reality independent of our moral thoughts? Can moral claims be logically derived from non-moral ones?) In his later writing, the contentious disputes he sought to circumvent were those that arise when political actions are defended on the basis of sectarian religious principles, or other deep convictions about the meaning of life.

In his other major book, *Political Liberalism* (1993), Rawls came to speak of philosophy's potential for reconciliation, though this can easily be misunderstood. Reconciliation can be a tepid shameful stance when some of the contenders in the conflict are contemptible. Rawls loved the example of Lincoln's decision to go to war as the only way to prevent the spread of slavery and the splitting of the nation. But—and here is the familiar moral fact at the very center of Rawls's thought over the years—controversies arise even among reasonable, informed, morally decent people. In that case, Rawls thought, there are probably important things that all sides agree on, important commitments on which their shared decency and reasonableness depend. The identification of that common ground, if it is possible, would promote a kind of reconciliation. It is still not as if we could retreat to our shared assumptions and avoid the need to make the difficult decisions about which we initially disagreed. The goal is not to banish conflict. But, Rawls thought, if we can find and articulate our shared principles and convictions, adjusting them when necessary to accommodate more specific convictions, at least we might narrow the range of disagreement. Some of the original contending views might turn out to be indefensible; new views might emerge that make better sense of the basic principles. Disagreement might then be pursued more productively.

This kind of philosophical reconciliation is morally required, according to Rawls. Each reasonable citizen deserves an acceptable justification of existing or proposed political arrangements, quite apart from the value this might have for social peace. Still, the value of peace and stability is one part of the account, so it needs to be seen in its proper place. Disagreement and conflict would not and should not disappear, but if the contending parties recognized the common ground they shared, perhaps society would be less likely to fly apart. Of course, some grossly unjust societies may need to fly apart if justice is ever to arise. In bad times and places, justifications that are acceptable to all reasonable people might still not be acceptable to many people. The tragic consequences of social collapse are, Rawls plausibly believed, worth avoiding, even in a moderately unjust society, if (this is a big and noncomplacent "if") we can still steadily approach justice in other ways. This is when reconciliation has great value. But these conditions are not always met, and they are constantly challenged in modern societies. If reconciliation and pursuit of justice were hopeless, other values would have to be our guide. (Which values is an important question, but not Rawls's.) Whether the contending views in our own time and place are susceptible to Rawlsian reconciliation is, as Rawls himself says, far from obvious. He tries to demonstrate that reconciliation is possible in principle.

By some accounts, American society nearly flew apart in the late 1960s and early 1970s over controversies about social justice. Rawls's book, in 1971, did not give intellectual activists the direct practical relevance they asked for. But it did give them something they needed: an intellectually accomplished argument purporting to show that certain left-liberal claims were appropriate conclusions to draw from deep moral and political convictions that must be admitted by liberals and conservatives alike. Obviously, any such view is bound to remain controversial. But it may in fact have narrowed the range of controversy. For example, the idea that traditional liberal convictions lead inexorably to laissez-faire or libertarian approaches to property and markets—a view that was discrediting liberalism itself at the time—is less commonly held (except among libertarians). And the idea that liberal

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constitutional democracy must, inadvertently, but as a matter of principle, protect racism and sexism is also less common than it was in the 1960s and 1970s. Rawls's work has contributed to these changes.

I don't mean that the importance of Rawls's work is as a decisive intervention in the course of political events. It has played some role, but only the modest one that philosophy properly should play in the short run. Rawls wisely doubted that philosophy should pronounce on the complex choices faced by actual political actors in highly specific historical moments. Tactics, causal processes, relative weights of countless values both personal and political—the confluence of all these matters in a political choice—goes beyond what philosophy can claim to settle. I don't believe this means that political philosophy's proper role is exclusively abstract or detached, even to Rawls's moderate extent. Nor is political philosophy the only kind of politically important intellectual work. But philosophy, by its nature, tends to abstraction, and that can be one of its practical virtues, even in urgent political contexts.

The greatness of John Rawls's work depends on its relevance for its time, but (again) *A Theory of Justice* did not say anything—not a word—about Jim Crow, women's liberation, or the Vietnam War. Paradoxically, its relevance has consisted partly in its drawing attention away from fights over specific practical political goals. By steering clear of many of the particular issues of the day in their temporary contexts (without in any way deriding them), Rawls leaves us a model of political philosophy that will retain its value over time. Social progress toward justice remains urgent, and it never happens without activism, conflict, and contextually specific arguments very different from Rawls's work. But we will pursue the goal of social justice more clearly and effectively if, as just one stratagem in the struggle, we reflect on deeper principles that we share. The point is not to avoid or deny the disagreements, but to shed light on them. Rawls's work was hardly nonpartisan. He pursued a deeply egalitarian liberal political agenda, but in that patient and indirect way.

This remote or reticent approach to political philosophy can easily look like a symptom of Rawls's legendary personal humility. At other times, in its hope of philosophy's making any difference at all, it looks positively audacious. ●

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Letter to a Former Subscriber

Joanne Barkan

DEAR _____,

I knew something had gone wrong by the time the *Dissent* public forum called "Patriotism in a Time of War" ended that evening last October in New York City. Some people in the audience (although by no means everyone) seemed to have concluded that the three speakers—all of us *Dissent* editorial board members—were arguing that leftists in the United States should be patriotic right now and that patriotism requires supporting the Bush administration's policies, including a war against Iraq. Since I despise the Bush administration and wholeheartedly oppose its policies, including the war, this was a jolt. A few days later, I heard that you had attended the forum and then canceled your subscription.

A canceled subscription isn't necessarily a grave problem for *Dissent*. Obviously we want

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to put out a magazine that attracts and keeps readers, but I've also heard it said that if a magazine of criticism like *Dissent* doesn't generate enough debate to lose a subscriber now and then, it's not doing its job. Still, the gap between what I thought I had communicated and what some listeners heard—and I'm writing here only about my part in the forum—is a problem for me. On the one hand, I know I stated more than once that being patriotic has never meant that you shouldn't protest government policies or social conditions and struggle to change them. Think of Martin Luther King, Jr., whose goal was to make the United States live up to its founding ideals. On the other hand, I needed to say more because a string of issues for the left—patriotism, explanations of 9/11, U.S. imperialism, and political dissent—have gotten badly tangled over the last eighteen months. Rethinking how I would disentangle them for myself, I've come up with three points:

First, patriotism and the left. Patriotism is simply a feeling, and it comes in all the usual versions of a feeling: strong, weak, fleeting, latent, and so on. You can't tell yourself to feel patriotic anymore than you can urge someone else to feel that way. The problem is *not* that part of the U.S. left doesn't feel patriotic or make a show of patriotism. But it is a problem if some leftists come across as disdaining the patriotism of other Americans as if there were no difference between patriotism and jingoism. This matters because many U.S. citizens who support progressive causes or consider themselves radical, or voted for Gore or Nader in 2000, or march against war in Iraq also feel patriotic. Leftists who can't fathom or differentiate the patriotism of their own political allies (or potential allies) have to consider why this is so and whether or not it undermines the left. This issue came up during all the flag waving immediately after 9/11.

Second, the causes of 9/11. In trying to analyze 9/11, part of the left relied too heavily on the "blowback" notion, which is as follows: American imperialism generates so much hatred for the United States around the world that some of the haters inevitably turn to terrorism. This is incomplete and too simple. Any serious attempt to understand the causes of 9/11 should also include the Wahhabi brand of fundamentalist Islam, the lack of democracy in Muslim nations, the role of religious brainwashing, the pressures of globalization, and local circumstances (for example, the differences between Afghanistan and Indonesia). But criticizing a simplistic blowback theory doesn't mean you condone U.S. imperialism or have opted to go along with the Bush administration.

Third, political dissent. I don't see a contradiction between the two previous points and the fact that I oppose the Bush administration unequivocally. Why, then, do discussions about patriotism and criticism of some left responses to 9/11 create such controversy? I think it's because the intra-left debate has coincided with the Bush administration's attempt to stifle all dissent in the country. For almost a year after 9/11, Bush and his conservative allies painted anyone who questioned White House policy as unpatriotic and a tool of "the enemy"; they labeled anyone who protested U.S. foreign policy as anti-American or soft on terrorism. No administration in decades has made such a concerted effort to silence opposition. In this environment, the word "patriotism" sets off alarm bells during a debate about the left, and whatever is said risks being identified with (or at least tainted by) the administration's cynical manipulations. With more clarity and closer attention all round, it shouldn't be so hard to avoid this kind of misinterpretation.

Meanwhile, on the positive side, the consolidation of a broad-based antiwar movement in the United States has shattered White House dreams of an obedient populace. The next step is to extend the movement into an ongoing opposition to both the foreign and domestic policies of the Bush administration. The left's internal debate will no doubt continue.●

Joanne Barkan is a longtime activist and member of the *Dissent* editorial board.

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The End of History and Its Discontents

Paul Berman

LATIN AMERICA AT THE END OF POLITICS
by Forrest D. Colburn
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FRANCIS FUKUYAMA introduced his notion of "The End of History" in the *National Interest* in 1989 and added a few lively elaborations in *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992; and though people all over the world snickered at the naiveté of his idea in 1989, and snickered again in 1992, and have kept on snickering, Fukuyama's marvelous provocation has never entirely faded into the past, as provocations usually do. And there is good reason for this. In presenting his theory about the capital-letter End of History, Fukuyama made three related points. He argued that challenges to liberal democracy from other ideological and social systems had failed, and any new such challenge in the foreseeable future was likewise bound to fail. He argued that liberal democratic societies were therefore destined to dominate the world. And he argued that liberal democracy's triumph was going to be, all in all, a disappointment—a triumph of the gray, the ignoble, and the mediocre. Such was his three-pronged provocation. It was a stimulating idea, if only because it challenged us to tally up the ways in which he was wrong—and right. So let us draw up a tally. How does the End of History look today, fourteen years after Fukuyama first broached his theme?

In Europe today—Fukuyama's End of History was, I think, mostly a theory about Europe—his three points seem to me, in retrospect, all too accurate. Totalitarian movements have pretty much disappeared from the European landscape. Nor does any other kind of social system, something different from liberal democracy, seem to be in the offing, even as a remote possibility. A specter is not haunting Europe. Everyone knows that, in Russia and other Slavic zones far to the east, Europe's transition to liberal democracy has turned out to be, at best, slow and shaky; in Belarus and a few other places, non-existent. Still, Fukuyama's argument never promised liberal democracy for everyone. The argument predicted, instead, liberal democracy's domination over other systems, and that is the case in Europe. Mafias and tyrants may have kept their hold on power, here and there; but mafias and tyrants do not seem to be the wave of the European future.

ON THE OTHER hand, nobody could argue today that Europe's liberal democracy has turned out to be especially noble or inspiring. The European democrats have shown themselves to be admirably gifted at securing the good life for themselves, and often they have been generous to other people, too. But not when it comes to taking a risk. Europe's democrats have proved to be noticeably reluctant to put up a fight on behalf of anyone else, or even on behalf of their own European civilization. No sooner did Fukuyama's book come out, back in 1992, than the Europeans threw up their hands in helpless despair at the fate of Europe's principal indigenous religious minority, the Muslims of the Balkans. Europe would not defend its Jews, sixty years ago, and Europe would not defend its Muslims ten years ago. It was principally the American military, not the rich and powerful Europeans, who rescued Bosnia and Kosovo. Liberal democracy in Europe turned out to be a gated community, intended to create a perfect society for the fortunate populations within the gates, with alms and best

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wishes for the rest of the world. Some of the Europeans have lately been showing a little more fight in Afghanistan and even in the Middle East, which is good to see. But, taken in sum, Fukuyama's three-pronged prediction in regard to Europe has turned out to be reasonably accurate, as predictions go.

Let us turn from Europe to the larger Muslim world. How does the End of History seem to be faring in those parts? The most salient of Fukuyama's three points was his observation about totalitarianism and its defeat. Nothing of the sort can be seen in the Muslim world. Modern totalitarianism arose in Europe after the First World War. But in the next few years, over the course of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the Muslim world generated, by my reckoning, two variations of its own on the European totalitarian inspiration, and those two variations eventually flowered into powerful movements—into the Arab Ba'ath Party of Saddam Hussein and other people today, and into the Islamist movement of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and other radical Islamist currents. Fukuyama unveiled his argument at the very moment, in 1989, when those movements were, ironically enough, in full bloom. Saddam in that year, having already fought his war with Iran and with his own Kurdish rebels, was gearing up to launch his new war in Kuwait and still more wars against his own people. The Islamists were perfecting their technique of random massacres and suicide attacks—the technique whose true origin was the "human wave" suicide attacks of Khomeini's army.

By the time that Fukuyama presented his argument, Ba'athism and radical Islamism had already killed probably more than a million people; and in the next few years, millions more—between 1.5 and two million in the Sudan alone; a hundred thousand in Algeria; untold thousands in Iraq; the innumerable victims of Islamism in Afghanistan, and so on. This was not the End of History. This was the crimson tide of the twentieth century. Nobody reading Fukuyama's argument would have expected to see such a thing in the Muslim world—even if, in a chance phrase here or there, he did allow for terrible possibilities. You could even argue that Fukuyama's End of History, together with the ebullient theories of many other delighted observers of communism's collapse, helped to obscure the panorama of crime and tragedy in the Muslim world. The massacres took place, but we liberal-minded inhabitants of the Western world were reveling in our own successes. We felt happy and confident about the stability of our own liberal democracy; and somehow the gigantic massacres did not upset us. Nor did we imagine that we ourselves would end up in danger.

Still, Fukuyama's argument may have touched on a truth even in the Muslim world, at least prospectively. Gilles Kepel, the scholar of contemporary Muslim society, makes the case in his book *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* that Islamism gathered strength during the whole period from the 1970s into the early 1990s—but then entered into a fateful and irreversible decline. There was a period when the Ba'ath and the radical Islamist movement, both of them, could claim to have found novel and idiosyncratic Muslim roads to modernity and a successful society, superior to anything in the liberal democracies of the West. But, beginning in the middle 1990s, those claims became ever more difficult to sustain. Saddam's Ba'ath never did entirely recover from the 1991 Gulf War, even if the tyrant could boast of having fended off the United States, for the time being. Nor did the Islamic Republic of Iran turn out to be a success. The other Islamist experiments were disasters.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan tried to reinstate the Golden Age of the Muslim Caliphate from the seventh century, in a Central Asian version of the present day; but the resurrected Caliphate proved to be a reign of war, starvation, despair, oppression, and poverty—a failed undertaking by every measure, even if, in Saudi Arabia and other places around the Muslim world, people continued to look on Islamist Afghanistan as utopia achieved. Radical Islamism in the Sudan, in Egypt, and in Algeria seemed promising and vigorous and strong, for a while; but repression and defeat and even success took their toll. This is what a partisan of the End of History would have predicted. What about Fukuyama's other points, in that case? Will the failure and defeat of the Ba'ath and the Islamists lead to the

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rise of liberal democracy? Will the United States devote the energy and effort and the courage to bolster the Muslim liberals? (And will our American left come to its senses and encourage the Bush administration to do more in this regard, instead of less? That might help.) Will the European powers likewise do more, instead of less? We will see. In any case, the End of History appears to be, in regard to the Muslim world, mostly a sci-fi speculation, at least for now—an insight into European history that has thus far yielded not too many insights into the history of the Muslim countries.

Let us turn to Latin America. How is the End of History faring in that part of the world? In Latin America, as almost everywhere else, Fukuyama's theory was taken (somewhat unfairly) to be a Reaganite shout of triumph, and it aroused an instant feeling of outrage and indignation. The Nicaraguan philosopher Alejandro Serrano Caldera published a response to Fukuyama as early as 1991 under the title *El fin de la historia: Reaparición del mito* (Havana: Editorial 13 de Marzo, 1991), intending to defend a revolutionary Marxist project. And, in fact, revolutionary Marxism did manage to survive in Latin America. Fidel Castro has entered his fifth decade of one-man rule, and, when he travels abroad, crowds of naive and misinformed people still come out to cheer. In Colombia, the Marxist guerrillas remain extremely powerful, even if their Marxism contains a strange mix of cocaine revenue and jungle millenarianism. These are some of the anomalies of Latin American life today. Still, in most other respects, Latin American Marxism has collapsed, and so have the several Latin traditions that descend from the Fascism of the 1920s and 1930s. The larger vector of political thought and action in Latin America has definitely pointed in the direction that Fukuyama identified. At the start of the 1980s, most of Latin America was dominated by despots and military dictators, principally on the extreme right. Even the left-wing dictators, in Cuba and Nicaragua, were careful to wear their military uniforms. Those days are gone. Every single government in Latin America today, except Cuba's, conforms at least outwardly to the principles of liberal democracy. The forward step is enormous—though, to be sure, much could be said about conditions in this place and that, almost everywhere in the region.

Latin America has produced a new political literature to accompany and encourage this transition, and, in that literature, the single most important book has been, I would think, Jorge Castañeda's *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War*, in 1993. In that book, Castañeda addressed his comrades of the Marxist left. He laid out an argument against keeping up the guerrilla challenge from the past. His argument reflected a deep knowledge of guerrilla affairs and the Latin American left, which made the book authoritative. And Castañeda did more. In Mexico, he broke through the petrified categories of "left-wing" and "right-wing," which had always prevented the democrats of the left and the right from uniting. He put together a little group of left-liberals who helped bring about the election of Vicente Fox, no left-winger, to the presidency two years ago. That was a breakthrough for political liberalism in Latin America. And still more: Castañeda served until just recently at the head of Fox's foreign ministry, where he pushed Mexico to adopt a liberal, human-rights foreign policy—sometimes even a pro-American policy, an unheard-of development in Mexican history.

BUT WHAT HAS been the larger result of these developments in Latin America? Forrest D. Colburn takes up this question in his own response to Fukuyama, *Latin America at the End of Politics*. Colburn is a political scientist who, in the early 1980s, was driven by the spirit of the age to spend a couple of years in Nicaragua, when the Sandinista People's Revolution was in its prime. I think it is fair to say that, like most of the other academics and journalists who journeyed to Nicaragua from around the world in those years, Colburn keenly hoped for a Sandinista success—that is, a revolution that would succeed in creating a new society with much more wealth, social equality, and freedom than before. He made careful observations of Sandinista agrarian policies, and he produced a sophisticated and observant study called *Post-Revolutionary Nicaragua*, in 1986. Unfortu-

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nately, he was unable to report a success. Colburn concluded that Sandinista policies had led to a devastating fall in farm productivity—a disaster for Nicaragua, which has always depended on agricultural exports. Naturally, he blamed the contra war and the United States foreign policy for some of the problems. But he was able to identify the precise ways in which the Sandinista plans and planners had wreaked their own damage. His book was the first substantial report about the Sandinista failure in agriculture—a brave and original book, which he wrote in a period when quite a few other academic scholars were blithely repeating all sorts of preposterous claims of success by the Sandinista government. It was only later, in the 1990s, that the Sandinistas themselves, in a series of writings and analyses, finally confirmed Colburn's analyses.

MEANWHILE, he wrote a second book called *Managing the Commanding Heights*, which came out in 1990. This book described the Sandinista management of a handful of prominent enterprises in Nicaragua. Only, a pity, here again, for all his revolutionary sympathies, he felt obliged to report on the managerial inefficiencies and errors. The tropical breezes of Central America ran up against a glacier of managerial advice from Bulgaria and other countries from the Soviet bloc, and impossible fogs drifted across the Nicaraguan economy, to the detriment of all. Colburn wrote a third book, too, a modest and amusing volume of anecdotes and personal memoirs of Nicaraguan life called *My Car in Managua*, in 1991, full of the colors and flavors of the Sandinista revolution. In these books, Colburn was somehow able to retain the sobriety of his own thinking, even amid the inebriating breezes of Marxist and anti-Marxist ideology. He was systematic in his analyses, yet personal, too. He knew how to invoke the experience of daily life. He did not rely simply on government figures, as almost everyone else seemed to do. He wanted to know, in a practical vein: how does wealth get produced? Who does what, and to what effect? He went to see with his own eyes. His accounts of the economic aspects of the revolution ended up being, as a result, more detailed, more human, and more reliable, in my judgment, than anyone else's. And so, Colburn became the chief scholarly chronicler and analyst of revolutionary Marxism's historic failure in Central America—not a role that he would have picked for himself. But such was his destiny.

Then he broadened his outlook. Having labored not only in Nicaragua but in Costa Rica (where he is associated with Latin America's principal management school, called INCAE), he went to teach for a while in Addis Ababa, in order to observe the Marxist revolution in Ethiopia. And he produced, at last, a wide-ranging analysis of third world revolution as a whole—a series of general observations about Marxist and third worldist revolutions all over the planet: a truly global analysis. This book, *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries*, which came out in 1994, proposed a number of bold conclusions about the entire wave of revolution in the third world.

Colburn addressed the Marxists as well as the modernization theorists—the many people who, from different points of view, had tried to explain third world revolutions by identifying their deep social and economic causes, and who had tried to see in those revolutions a forward step for society. He pointed out, as he had previously done in Nicaragua, that revolutionary policies do not always achieve anything even remotely useful and sometimes produce the opposite of their intended effect: poverty instead of wealth, inequality instead of equality, civil war instead of civility. Colburn did not see a forward step in the many socialist revolutions around the world; he saw backward steps, one calamity after another. And he asked a question: if revolutions around the world were producing backward steps in economic development, if the revolutions were leading to poverty and war, why did so many people eagerly rush forward to lead those revolutions, to suffer and die on their behalf? What was the grand factor around the world that pushed thousands and millions of people into the revolutionary ranks, in spite of every evidence of tragedy, crime, failure, and disaster?

This was a big question. Colburn came up with what might seem a shocking answer. He did not think that grand factors around the world had pushed thousands and millions of

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people into the revolutionary ranks. He thought that revolutionary socialism (or what was called socialism) was a kind of fad or fashion, which had swept the world. "There are fashions in ideas as well as clothes, and revolution was one," he wrote. The wave of revolution in poor countries "was neither foreordained nor historically inevitable." It was merely a vogue. And he demonstrated the plausibility of this observation by pointing to the many extraordinary ways in which socialist and even Islamist revolutions in the third world tended to resemble one another, down to the iconography of their posters and costumes—this, despite the huge differences in local reality and cultural traditions from one country to the next.

Colburn did not address Fukuyama in this book; and yet his argument contained an important observation that weighed against Fukuyama and the End of History. Fukuayama's theory came out of Hegel. The argument stressed the role of impersonal and inevitable factors in world history, which are bound to lead to ever higher social developments, unto the End of History, which Fukuyama defined as liberal democracy. But Colburn's observations in *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries* stressed the role of personal and even idiosyncratic factors. He identified the power of what ought to be called whim in history: the consequences of mere fashion and fad, without any higher rationality at work. "A complete understanding of revolution necessarily leads one into the murky world of passion and imagination," he wrote. "At some point the confounding question needs to be broached: What is the origin of ideas, of understood possibilities? It is difficult to maintain analytic rigor because, in the end, revolution is neither predictable nor rational. Indeed, no revolution is ever really 'necessary.' There are no sufficient causes." That was not a Hegelian argument. That was an anti-Hegelian argument.

Still, in these books Colburn took note of a distinctive turn in world events, which was the failure of Marxism and Marxist-like doctrines in vast portions of the world. The general outcome of those revolutionary failures was something he could hardly miss. It was a new prestige for liberal democracy all over the world, sometimes also a political triumph. In that respect, Colburn ended up noting the same phenomenon that occupied Fukuyama's attention—the triumph that Fukuyama mischievously called the End of History, but which Colburn, in his Fukuyama-influenced but anti-Hegelian mood, prefers to call the End of Politics.

WHAT DOES this phrase mean—The End of Politics? In Colburn's description, it pretty much means what Castañeda wrote about in *Utopia Disarmed*, which is to say: the abandonment of the Marxist revolutionary ambition that got its start in 1959 with the Cuban Revolution—the abandonment of guerrilla insurgencies and the end of the mass Marxist and Cuban- or Soviet-style revolutionary movements: the end of what Castañeda calls Latin America's "Thirty Years War." The End of Politics means something larger, too. In the field of politics, Latin Americans have achieved one great historic success. They have created sturdy and stable nation states—which is why, among all the regions of the world, Latin America, together with North America, has engaged in the fewest wars between states, a triumph of politics. And the Latin Americans have tried to build on this triumph, too, by looking to their national states to dominate economies and to establish social equality. In the past, revolutionary Marxism struck many Latin Americans as merely a new, scientific variation on the old Latin theme of the all-powerful state.

But in recent decades, statist economics tended to wilt pretty dramatically in Latin America. The 1980s were a decade of authoritarian collapse in the field of politics, and were also a decade of economic collapse—a decade of depression and setback, which badly damaged the prestige of the old-fashioned statist solutions. And so, when the new liberal democracies emerged, the people in charge felt obliged and even eager to abandon the economics of the past, whether those policies had gone under right-wing or left-wing labels. In this way, the 1990s turned out to be a decade of liberal democracy in government—and of a certain kind of anti-statism in economics, all across Latin America, with a couple of exceptions here and there. This was the economics

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of what was called the "Washington Consensus," more or less as dictated by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other powerful institutions with Washington addresses.

In observing these political and economic trends, Colburn pauses to wonder at the uniformity of Latin America's evolution. "How did so many countries in Latin America, each unique, come to embrace liberalism at the end of the twentieth century? This is a puzzle." He can find no adequate explanation. This evolution would seem to be another example of a vogue or fashion in political and economic theory—a set of new ideas that has swept Latin America, just as, in the past, the tides of Marxist revolution swept across the universities and some of the trade unions: a huge and fundamentally inexplicable event. The vogue in this new case may be even stronger than any vogue of the recent past. "There is an end to ideological confrontation and contestation," he says. "What has triumphed, more through default than victory, is liberalism: democracy and capitalism," and nothing has arisen to challenge it.

The practical results have been odd, though. Politically speaking, liberal democracy has created a solid and useful stability in some countries, and not much stability at all in other countries, and for reasons that are hard to identify. Constitutional and democratic rule appears to be fairly successful in El Salvador; and much less so in Nicaragua, next door. Peru was one of the first countries to embrace a liberal democratic alternative; and Peru has undergone all kinds of political mayhem and instability ever since. Venezuela can boast of a long democratic tradition; yet Venezuela today is floundering, as Colburn observes. Chile can likewise boast of a long tradition; and Chilean democracy is doing relatively well.

Similar oddities characterize the economic consequences of the new wave of market-oriented (or relatively market-oriented) reforms. The overall economic results of the new dispensation in Latin America have been admirable, Colburn reports. "In Latin America today these are 'good times'—economies are on the rebound, prosperity is welcome, and it is hard to question the free trade strategy that has led to growth." That is his conclusion, anyway (though I know that some people would argue otherwise). But the good times are unevenly distributed. The economic collapse in Argentina evidently took place after Colburn had completed his book, but Argentina's pitiful condition today merely illustrates his larger point. For what deep factor can explain why Argentina is failing miserably—even while Chile, which shares with Argentina one of the largest borders in the world and shares a rather similar European population, too, has had no trouble keeping its head above water? But the worst problem in Latin America is a spectacular inequality of wealth, not so much between nations as within them—the greatest inequality of any region in the world, Colburn says.

In Latin America, 150 million people—a third of the entire population—live on less than two dollars a day. And yet this terrible statistic does not owe to the overall poverty of the region. The misery owes, instead, to a frightfully unjust sharing of the wealth. "If income in Latin America were distributed as it is in the countries of Southeast Asia," Colburn explains, "poverty in Latin America would be reduced by four-fifths"—an astounding fact (even if I'm not entirely sure which countries should go under the rubric of Southeast Asia). Latin America's poverty is largely rural. But then again, in Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela, a great many extremely poor people dwell in cities, just to confound still further any generalization that someone might like to propose. And what is the solution for this terrible inequality? The champions of the Washington Consensus confidently expected that economic growth was going to solve the problem, in time. That was why, during the 1980s and into the 1990s, so many serious-minded and even nationalist-minded people in Latin America were happy to embrace dictates from faraway, gringo-dominated, financial institutions. The promised economic growth duly took place. But the inequality has shown no sign whatsoever of diminution.

Extreme inequality is an old Latin American theme. Colburn observes that, over the

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course of the twentieth century, the Latin Americans have tried over and over to address it. The Mexican Revolution during the 1930s and 1940s, Juan Perón's corporatist dictatorship in Argentina, the Bolivian revolution of 1952, the Peruvian military coup of 1968—those were serious endeavors. But nothing entirely succeeded—except the Cuban Revolution of 1959, which achieved a remarkable equality of wealth only by destroying the national culture, eliminating any vestige of political freedom, and apparently eliminating the capacity for economic growth. Latin America plainly needs to make another, newer effort, on an even larger scale, drawing on the accumulated wisdom of the past—an effort of a different kind, stripped of the errors of earlier times, more sophisticated and less authoritarian than before. There is even a fairly wide agreement about what needs to be done, Colburn tells us. The national states have grown weak and underfinanced, and this needs to be remedied. Government spending in the world's richest countries, measured against the gross domestic product, tends to be about double what it is in Latin America. The national states do not need to resume state ownership of industry. But they do need to establish a proper system of law and order. Police forces need to be completely rebuilt. There ought to be a huge investment in education, in health care, and in income support for the very poor.

But here we arrive at the final oddity of democratic liberalism in Latin America today—an oddity of Latin America at the End of Politics which, I might add, may be visible in other regions, too, perhaps even in the same hemisphere. The liberalism of present-day Latin America has embraced the *liberté* of the French Revolution, but wants nothing to do with *égalité* or *fraternité*. Fukuyama feared that liberal democracy, in its triumph, was going to lack nobility of purpose and the ability to fight for higher things, was going to lack the warrior traits that Nietzsche yearned to see restored to modern life. (Nietzsche supplied the second half of Fukuyama's doctrine, the part about "The Last Man," after the Hegelian part about "The End of History.") But Colburn does not see any Hegelian factors at work in world affairs, and neither does he fret over the factors that worried Nietzsche. A lack of warrior traits in modern Latin American life does not upset Forrest Colburn. He fears something else, instead. It is a lack of social conscience.

He is withering on the new customs and tastes of the Latin American rich. The wealthy class throughout the region has known how to keep up its own development—how to establish and maintain some good universities, even private universities, and keep up the professional skills that are necessary for a modern life. But the wealthy class has lost interest in the poor. Colburn describes the new shopping malls that have become a fad across the region. The malls attract crowds of the wealthy and the privileged, who find there a refuge from poverty and crime, and spend their money on ridiculous luxury items from abroad in order to dream of life in other parts of the world. In Nicaragua, where coffee is the principal export, a mall sells Maxwell House tins from the United States. In Costa Rica, which exports mangos, a mall sells imported mango juice.

And how has the political left responded to these new circumstances? Colburn offers a couple of portraits, which he presents as representative. He describes a Nicaraguan Sandinista who, after having suffered horribly for the revolution, has retreated to a life of cattle ranching, just as he might have done even if a vogue for leftism had never swept across Nicaragua. And Colburn describes a Salvadoran communist who, without having given up her idealism, has turned away from politics in favor of social work on behalf of Salvador's grievously oppressed women—a commendable and important project, given the gender inequalities everywhere in Latin America. And yet, this kind of social work, in Colburn's estimation, holds out no possibility of transforming the whole of society, precisely because social work is not political and does not aim at achieving or deploying state power. Colburn gazes at bookstores throughout the region. He finds many fewer political books about Latin America than in the past. The new era is unintellectual, lacking in curiosity, unadventurous—an age without ideas. And yet there are so many problems, even apart from the distri-

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bution of wealth.

He looks at crime. It has reached disastrous levels in many countries. He looks at the ecological crises of the region. The origins of those crises are fantastically complex, and the underfinanced national states cannot begin to cope. He looks at the cultural influences from the United States, which are vast and growing. The influences are, in many respects, entirely harmful—a cult of gang violence, for instance. There is urban atomization, personal isolation, and, he concludes, a lack of vigor in the graphic arts. And so, the End of Politics is, in Colburn's eyes, a gray age in Latin America, an age of something worse than mediocrity, an age without promise, a tragic and inglorious age.

I think that, in some ways, his book is a little too gloomy. Latin America has continued to be wonderfully vigorous in the field of literary art, and wonderfully vigorous musically, as the world has happily recognized. Latin American cinema is blossoming. These are great strengths, but these particular strengths happen to fall outside of Colburn's scope, in this book. Nor does he consider the new populist and left-wing movements or leaders that have come to power in Brazil and Ecuador—events that took place after he had finished his book. Do these movements represent a sign of hope, or an ominous sign that Latin America may slide back into the authoritarian instability and demagoguery of the past, as seems to have happened in Venezuela? I hope he will turn to these new topics soon. But, even without taking on every conceivable theme, his present book, with its mix of grand generalizations, philosophical puzzlement, and personal portraits, offers a usefully nuanced, sympathetic, and knowledgeable portrait of Latin America. And perhaps of something more—a portrait of liberal democracy and its fateful limitations at the End of History.

Reading *Latin America at the End of Politics*, I came away thinking that the political revolutions of the last couple of decades have achieved marvels in the field of political liberty. And it is good to be rid of the failed and false economic doctrines of the past. But the feeling of having come to an "end," the feeling that Marxism and some other doctrines of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have become hopelessly antique—this feeling had better give way to a feeling of new promise, and soon. This is Colburn's point, and I am entirely sympathetic with it. We have got to find a new way of posing the old questions of social conscience. We have got to find a language for speaking about equality and fraternity and not just about liberty—a new socialism, whatever it will be called, to replace the several failed socialisms of the past. Some people have kept on chanting the erroneous and antiquated slogans of long ago, which is pointless and even harmful, and other people have chosen to waste away their lives in shopping malls, which is idiotic. Surely there has got to be another alternative. But what will this new alternative be—the new appeal to the social conscience? What will it look like? What will be its sound and rhythm? Colburn's book is only 142 pages, with many brief chapters punctuated with illustrations by contemporary Latin American artists—a book to be read at a rapid clip. But this pace, structure, and style accommodate the response to Latin America's present reality that his analyses and impressions arouse, which is, in two words, indignant impatience. An urge to get started with something new. Quickly, quickly. •

PAUL BERMAN is the author most recently of *Terror and Liberalism*.

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Homocons

Bob Berens

THE ATTACK QUEERS:
LIBERAL SOCIETY AND THE GAY RIGHT
by Richard Goldstein
Verso, 2002 108pp $22

ALTHOUGH NOT as catchy or as politically incorrect as its African American equivalent, the lexicon of gay slang now has its own version of the term "Uncle Tom." The word is "homocon," short for homosexual conservative, and we have Richard Goldstein and his recent book, *The Attack Queers: Liberal Society and the Gay Right*, to thank for introducing it.

According to Voter News Service exit polls, an estimated one million gays and lesbians voted for George W. Bush in the 2000 election. This is a surprising figure; the assumption of gay and lesbian political liberalism has, until recently, been a pretty safe bet. There is, however, a certain reluctance to profess one's bewilderment. Better to bite one's tongue and silently muse: Black Republicans? Gay conservatives?

It is exactly this kind of passive, liberal response that Goldstein rails against in *The Attack Queers*. With this book, he attempts to reassert the historical continuity of leftist political activism and the relatively young gay liberation movement, and to win back gays and lesbians who have drifted rightward over the past decade. *The Attack Queers* argues that we are on the verge of a widespread cultural backlash against the gains in gay visibility and tolerance achieved over the past thirty years, the most glaring evidence of which is the prominence and popularity of gay conservatives in the mainstream media.

What seems to worry Goldstein most is what he perceives to be a dissolution of a political and community-based gay identity, worn away by the appeal and success of gay "strivers" and talking heads such as Andrew Sullivan and Camille Paglia, and replaced by an individualistic and consumerist ethos of every homo for him- or herself. He seems less preoccupied with how this shift will affect politics than with the disappearance of some nebulously defined left-gay essence and the potential social and sexual transformations such a spirit could have, one day, brought about. Indeed, Goldstein is so confident that the pundits he targets inaccurately reflect majority gay opinion that he devotes very little time to exploring the rise of a gay right in America, as constituted by actual citizens. The war Goldstein is attempting to wage is primarily focused on the gay conservative members of the pundit class.

Goldstein is a gifted polemicist, and his explanation of the allure of Paglia's and Sullivan's work is intermittently brilliant. According to Goldstein, "homocons" can say things liberal heterosexuals are too uncomfortable and afraid to say, can voice opinions that from the mouth of a straight person would be considered unforgivably homophobic. Catching Paglia on television or reading Sullivan on *Salon* can function as a safe, vicarious act of politically incorrect titillation. The fact that the two are themselves gay, coupled with their well-tailored, media-savvy images and their relatively liberal positions on a variety of social issues, makes it that much easier to enjoy some arguably retrograde thought.

Sullivan espouses a conventional, assimilationist sexual ethic, one of monogamy, commitment, and marriage. (He has written that the gay rights movement should call it quits as soon as legally recognized gay marriage is achieved). Although he doesn't often play the scold to gay hedonism—at least not to the extent that Goldstein suggests—he does periodi-

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cally inquire into the possible psychological and emotional origins of such behavior. It could be argued that Sullivan sees pathology where other, more radical, gay writers see freedom and sexual diversity. Paglia celebrates mythic conceptions of gender roles, and her gender essentialism, although balanced by an equal emphasis on cultural construction, cuts against the grain of most contemporary theorizing about gender; most of her ideas sit well with our more ingrained and conservative understandings of gender. The Darwinian world of sexual power dynamics, with men as sexual aggressors and women as cunning vamps *is* Paglia's utopia.

The success of conservatism in this country over the past twenty years has been achieved largely by the steady co-optation and absorption of yesterday's liberal victories. This allows Sullivan and Paglia to claim the benefits and rewards of social and cultural progress as their own, while denying the validity of progressive or radical goals beyond those that have already been achieved at a given moment. It is along this line of thought that Goldstein's contention that even a registered Democrat such as Paglia is worthy of "homocon" status is somewhat persuasive. "Yea" to increased gay visibility and public tolerance, "nay" to hate-crimes legislation and anti-discrimination laws.

Goldstein's approach—conjectural, subjective, psychoanalytic—is such that his most illuminating ideas are inseparable from his most politically suspect. This is most apparent in his dissection—and conflation—of the work of Paglia and Sullivan. Although Sullivan and Norah Vincent, another conservative columnist from *Salon* and a disciple of Sullivan's, might agree with Paglia about, say, the inadequacies of the media-watchdog approach to gay liberation, their politics are hardly identical to hers. Paglia is a registered Democrat who supported Ralph Nader in the last presidential campaign, a fact Goldstein acknowledges and then proceeds to ignore. Vincent and Sullivan are dyed-in-the-wool, laissez-faire economic neoconservatives. By glossing over this distinction, Goldstein breaks faith with his readers.

Characterizing the "homocons" as gay—and therefore publicly acceptable—mouthpieces of politically incorrect thought is fair enough. But it never occurs to Goldstein that there is a deeper social problem at work if heterosexual liberals are craving outlets for sublimated homophobia, whether those outlets take the form of an Eminem, a Dr. Laura, or an Andrew Sullivan. Gay contrarians such as Paglia and Sullivan, I would argue, offer a valuable public service. Without the "attack queers" Goldstein speaks of, the media discourse on homosexuality would be a tiresome litany of scolding and sermonizing, rather than an open and honest—and yes, occasionally offensive—debate.

In his introduction to the book, Goldstein describes his intended audience as "Straight people who know little about the queer community, and gay people who know even less about the progressive tradition." His "main aim is to reach those who aren't aware of the rich connections between radical thought and queer sensibility." The other, presumably less desirable audience for the book is composed of "heterosexuals willing to acknowledge their anxieties about homosexuality." If Paglia and Sullivan do exert a disproportionate media influence, I think part of the reason can be traced to statements like this. They would never make this kind of implied demand on their heterosexual readership. One could argue that this reluctance illustrates their fundamental allegiance to the status quo; mostly, though, it attests to a healthier relationship to the non-gay world than Goldstein's. There is room for adversarial politics, but to view every heterosexual as a candidate for deprogramming and reeducation, to assert the necessity of their "[examining] their anxieties," is to invite an oddly legitimate kind of backlash.

"As a gay man in an ostensibly tolerant age . . . every encounter with a heterosexual involves expectations that arise from my sexuality. If my identity becomes known to the straight man with whom I'm conversing, his words will carry a certain formality beneath which I can read anxiety." Further evidence of a kind of heterophobic paranoia can be gleaned from Goldstein's comments at a panel discussion held at the New School last June: "It's about how all of us are regarded, beyond the handshake and beyond the smile. In my book

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I mention an old joke about Jews, which is: What is the definition of a kike? The Hebrew gentleman who's just left the room. I think we are all subject to that joke. I think that when we leave the room the homosexual gentleman becomes a faggot in the mind of our friend and . . . there is a lack of self-examination and that that examination that people, that heterosexual people must do is absolutely crucial to the future of gay liberation."

We are faced here with a rather cynical assumption of pervasive homophobia, even on the part of his "friend." (Goldstein should maybe consider getting some new ones.) Again, we have a righteous injunction to all heterosexuals to 'fess up to their homophobia and to get to work and fix it, divorced from any realistic awareness of how much time heterosexuals will ever be willing to devote to such a project; or, for that matter, any respect for the privacy and sanctity of an individual's personal beliefs, no matter how conservative. Again, a rhetorically convenient denial of the kind of politically correct fear liberal heterosexuals have of offending the delicate sensibilities of potentially oversensitive homosexuals. (Couldn't that account for some of the "certain formality" Goldstein speaks of?) And it is here that Goldstein exposes, inadvertently, what is so inviting about the worldview that Sullivan and Paglia offer to a younger generation of gays and lesbians, one that has developed beyond a reflexive assumption of heterosexual fear and disgust.

What little controversy *The Attack Queers* has managed to stir up has centered on Sullivan's charges that Goldstein deliberately misquotes and misrepresents his work. Aside from Sullivan's desire to protect his reputation—a couple of the misquotations are pretty egregious—most of the quibbling is probably moot. Goldstein specializes in a kind of pugilistic and peremptory journalism; his style isn't particularly balanced or scholarly. (Sullivan isn't exactly fair with his ideological opponents, either.) Goldstein doesn't engage Sullivan's or Paglia's work on its own terms; he's too busy sliding from slyly decontextualized quotations to their imagined cultural or social significance to bother. This approach yields insights about these writers' popular appeal, but it isn't rigorous or fair-minded enough to serve as the scorched-earth indictment of their work he seems to intend. And because he never quotes his targets at length and doesn't offer up a bibliography, it is almost impossible to put his citations in context. Just a little digging, however, shows a surprising disregard for accuracy.

He tells us that "Paglia's advice to any baby butch headed in that direction is to recover her full nature—by which Paglia means 'opening that thing to men.' As she once told an audience of college students: 'I'm not saying stop sleeping with women. I'm saying stop being a lesbian.'"

Compare this analysis with its apparent source, a lecture Paglia gave at M.I.T., published in *Sex, Art, and American Culture*:

> Once I thought that militant lesbianism was an answer; as the years have gone on, I have begun to feel it is not. I have not seen the results that I would have liked. I now feel that part of a woman's power is her power over men, her sexual power. And I'm not saying stop sleeping with women, I'm *not* saying stop being a lesbian. I'm saying that a lot of gay women have closed down half of their brain and half of their sensorium, and that when you open that thing toward men, then the sex with your girlfriend will be hotter! [Emphasis added.]

By manipulating her words, Goldstein suggests that Paglia had commanded lesbians to "open that thing" toward men—that is, to spread their legs and to receive the power and beauty of the phallus, a misreading no doubt calculated to anger lesbian feminists. His entire discussion of Paglia's work is structured around an extended analogy to pornography—which is treated, predictably enough, as a patriarchal, violent, and hetero-normative cultural force—but it is clear here that Goldstein is the one spinning Paglia's eros into porn.

Goldstein is writing about the limitations assimilation puts on gay identity; his claim is that liberal society's increased tolerance is conditional, part of a bargain, and that the gay-baiting theatrics of a Sullivan or Paglia are the ultimate fulfillment of this Faustian pact. Their public disloyalty to the gay community and their acceptance of the social and sexual sta-

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tus quo is, he argues, the same thing demanded of all homosexuals, writ large. The "attack queers" are popular because their loyalty is to their predominantly heterosexual audience and not to some conception of a gay community; their tithe is paid out by routinely "attacking" their homosexual peers. And although Goldstein never explicitly states this, throughout the book he keeps insinuating that their ultimate loyalty is to their careers and the fulfillment of their own ambitions. Reading *The Attack Queers*, one begins to wonder if Goldstein isn't perhaps more outraged by the homocons' success than he is by their ideas.

Goldstein could have launched his attack squarely at Sullivan's politics without utterly distorting his books, which are relatively sensitive and nuanced. He could have risked a real debate on the legal and constitutional particulars of gay civil rights. But in order to do so, he would have had to ditch his glib phraseology and narrowed the scope of his critique, because on most gay issues Sullivan is liberal, and on most political and economic issues Paglia is not a conservative. Goldstein renders himself powerless to respond to such criticism, and for what? For the privilege and pleasure of labeling other gay journalists heretics.

Ultimately, Goldstein's insistence on a vital link between homosexuality and progressive politics fails to convince. It is difficult to share his surprise and horror over the fact that, now that many of the goals of the gay liberation movement have been achieved, gays feel less and less tied to a strictly gay, strictly left politics. One can theorize endlessly about the connection between the development of a person's sexuality and political beliefs. But it's hard to see this relationship as of any political or public value; it is a personal and an aesthetic understanding of self, better suited to a navel-gazing memoir than a radical polemic. ●

BOB BERENS is a New York-based writer.

A Golden Age That Never Was

Rick Perlstein

DOWNSIZING DEMOCRACY:
HOW AMERICA SIDELINED ITS CITIZENS AND PRIVATIZED ITS PUBLIC
by Matthew A. Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg
Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002
294 pp $29.95

WHERE HAVE ALL THE VOTERS GONE?
by Martin P. Wattenberg
Harvard University Press, 2002 200 pp $39.95

MATTHEW A. CRENSON and Benjamin Ginsberg have a creepy theory about what popular democracy is: in the nineteenth century, the powerful granted the powerless such privileges as the right to vote, civil rights, some small voice in politics, and the opportunity to buy government bonds; in return, the powerless—now classed as citizens—gratefully served in the military, paid their taxes, and allowed themselves to be administered. This is how Crenson and Ginsberg define their golden age—a time, now past, when "citizens were the backbone of the Western state, providing it with the administrative, coercive, and extractive capabilities to conquer much of the world." It's an unpromising way to begin a book whose title—*Downsizing Democracy: How America Sidelined Its Citizens and Privatized Its Public*—would tempt many of us to pick up.

On this shaky foundation they propound a thesis at least a little more promising. It is that America's elites have lately learned that they can conquer the world without bothering about citizens at all. "In one public setting after an-

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other," Crenson and Ginsberg write, "government disaggregates the public into a mass of individual clients, consumers, and contributors," leading to "new and nonparticipatory ways of doing business." Elites have exploited that development to counter a structural flaw within the old model: namely, that a mobilized citizenry cannot be controlled. With pesky citizens out of the way, the powerful can defend their interests in less risky ways—in courtrooms, "by manipulating administrative procedures," through privatization. Citizens are left subject to a "personal democracy" of individual access to government services and redress—which is, to these authors, always bad. This is a bit of a creepy theory as well. Because personal democracy is not all bad, any more than their golden age was all good.

What Crenson and Ginsberg, both Johns Hopkins professors, have produced is a series of not-so-well-linked portraits of a great number of governmental and quasi-government sieves that divert the possibility of ordinary citizens exerting influence over their workings. And it certainly can be said, to get the praise out of the way, that some of these portraits are impressive. The section on those innocent-sounding monsters called "government sponsored enterprises"—Sallie Mae, Freddie Mac, and so on—is devastating: they are revealed as mere conduits for middle-class welfare, for-profit corporations that receive all kinds of government-granted advantages and offer very little public good in return.

I also like one of their ideas about the transformation of the American party system: they point out that the sixty million presidential nonvoters would seem a political bonanza for whichever party would endeavor to tap it, but that the parties have little interest in doing so—as shown by Walter Mondale's advisers telling him "that the idea of mobilizing new voters was 'backward thinking.'" The authors then argue that the parties' antique goal of mobilizing the masses has been partly supplanted by a system of "new patronage," whereby parties rely on the power of their built-in base of loyal activists ensconced within sectors of the government they control: the social service bureaucracy for the Democrats and the military-industrial complex for the Republicans.

It's an interesting insight, and yet . . . Take one of their examples of the retreat of mass mobilization: the Florida Recount Show. Once upon a time, recounts could become festivals of popular democracy, with candidates mobilizing grassroots networks to swarm the canvassing boards to vouchsafe a favorable outcome. In 2000, by contrast, Al Gore and Joe Lieberman "spent hours on the telephone each day contacting contributors"—to help pay for the lawyers, of course. "I'm quite sure that the polls don't matter in this, because it's a legal question," Gore told a television reporter. Better he should have found a way to make the polls matter, because they showed that an overwhelming number of Americans favored the full recount that would have given him the victory. But that would have meant putting grassroots troops in the street; which, for today's parties, is even more backward than mobilizing habitual nonvoters. Instead, to the party that best activated its professional cadres went the spoils.

Crenson and Ginsberg don't mention that the Republicans were able to raise $13.8 million for the fight, Gore and Lieberman only a quarter of that. The distortion that campaign finance introduced into the system—weighted heavily toward the more corporate-friendly Republicans—is exactly what comes to mind first when most of us think about how democracy has been downsized. It doesn't figure here. But then, acknowledging institutionalized entrenchments of unequal power has never been a strong suit of American political science. Crenson and Ginsberg ignore such bedrock realities in favor of a rickety structural scheme, rooted in a beggared reading of history: that the mobilizing of the masses through party discipline is the only variable that matters when measuring democracy.

Even their actual illustrations of this ideal betray very little to be proud of. Consider this example: "Republican party workers brought more than 25 percent of the Republican voters from every state in the union to walk past candidate William McKinley's home in rural Ohio as part of McKinley's 'front porch' campaign." From such glories, the Progressive movement—which proposed that trained ex-

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pert watchdogs could better vouchsafe fairness and accountability than boss-led voting blocs and would allow citizens better means to deal with the government as individual consumers of services—could only represent a precipitous fall. Of course it wasn't an awful judgment for those Progressives to make—just a compromised one.

But here is an underlying problem of this book: Crenson and Ginsberg brook no equivocation, recognize no tradeoff—anything that takes politics out of the realm of mobilizing mass party coalitions is inherently awful. Independent regulatory commissions become mere vessels for capture by industry. Issue-and-constituency-based interest groups become mere springboards for self-perpetuating and unaccountable bureaucracies. As if there has never arisen a problem of governmental administration that a political machine getting 90 percent of the public to the polls, by means fair and foul, couldn't solve, which is ridiculous.

But not as ridiculous as when they move on to the true villains of the piece: you and me. Their account of the post-Progressive progressives begins with a mangled and bizarre genealogy of what they think describes the "New Politics" of the late sixties and after. In actuality, the New Politics was a failed attempt at electoral realignment—the recognition *and mobilization* of a potential new political majority in which a new class of humanistic professionals made up but one part, alongside minorities, disillusioned youth, the new public service unions, and so on. Crenson and Ginsberg instead remember the New Politics as a greedy, antidemocratic cartel. Post-sixties, the American government become more and more the plaything of issue-driven ideological entrepreneurs, funded by the Ford Foundation, whose only true constituency was a media elite that disastrously fell for their specious claim to speak for the "public interest," and whose only accomplishment was "the delegation of government tasks and public funds to nongovernmental institutions likely to be staffed by fellow practitioners of the New Politics—nonprofit social service agencies, legal services clinics, public interest law firms, and the like." These are today's democracy-downsizing elites: "Having established their political influence . . . the liberal heirs of the New Politics were understandably reluctant to place it at risk by issuing appeals for mass activism. They were likely to flourish politically in a low-turnout environment."

When your villain in the downsizing of democracy is the Ralph Nader of the high consumer advocacy phase, you have a very compromised project. Most of the institutions they choose to indict are not democratic sinkholes; they are messy tradeoffs. True, courtrooms might be vulnerable to exploitation by cynical advocates. But many class action suits are lifesavers (trial lawyers would not be revered as folk heroes in much of the low-service, low-union South if they did not serve a democratic purpose). What's more, absent personal democracy's allowance for "private attorneys general" to sue on behalf of the public interest, and to recoup their legal costs if they win, America would not just have a big government—it would have a gargantuan one, with federal police powers as the only disincentives against powerful wrongdoers. They even see the laws that require federal advisory commissions to be fairly balanced in terms of points of view and their proceedings to be open to the public as cruel hoaxes: mere invitations to monopolization by issue-driven "experts" no more representative of the public than are regulated industries. It's a woeful capitulation to abstraction. Would it be better that administrative organs of the government be closed to the public? Would they be more effective if monopolized by politicians who owed their positions to the bosses who mobilize the anonymous masses to march past their porch bearing tapers and shouting acclamations?

On its own, *Downsizing Democracy* would not deserve the attention I'm giving it. But around the same time I ran across it I discovered another book that led me to suspect this idiosyncratic fetishization of nineteenth-century machine-based politics, and its mid-twentieth-century progeny, is not a fact so idiosyncratic among political scientists. I find this disturbing.

Where Have All the Voters Gone?, by UC-Irvine's Martin P. Wattenberg, is a valuable book. Wattenberg offers some novel ap-

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proaches to the puzzle of half a nation voluntarily disenfranchising itself. He starts off by citing some bad predictions. Mid-century social scientists knew, as we do, that the educated are more likely to vote than the unschooled—and the population as a whole was fast becoming more educated. They also observed how systems that institutionalized low voter turnout in the South were in retreat. From these facts they concluded that voting rates could only be expected to increase. Instead, beginning in the sixties, they began to fall. To approach the "why," Wattenberg makes an interesting move: he puts the data in international perspective. And he finds that at least for the early part of that period, "If there was any worldwide trend in turnout" in industrialized countries comparable to the United States, "it was an upward one." Their participation rates increased. Why did ours fall? And how might they be raised?

Wattenberg is a quantification guy, so he locks the possible hypotheses into neat—probably too neat—variables. Is it the difficulty Americans have registering to vote? No, other countries have more difficult procedures (and in North Dakota, with no registration requirement, turnout has also declined precipitously). Is it because races are less competitive here? He finds no correlation between competitiveness and turnout. Is it Americans' paltry choice between only two viable candidates in nearly every election, or the absence of a working-class-identified party, or the narrowness of the ideological spectrum generally? It may in fact be so. But since the rest of the industrial world is moving in our direction—with elections everywhere devolving into contests between two umbrella coalitions led by personality-based candidacies—it seems unlikely that the trend will bend back any time soon.

Other parts of his research focus on the United States. The stuff on the effect of negative ads is great. The favorite plaint among politicians is that such ads depress turnout (the bromide serves them well because it focuses attention away from the cracks in the political system itself). Wattenberg proves that the very premise is drivel: The most-cited work on the subject is based on controlled experiments, not actual election data—which in fact shows that the more respondents remember ads, the higher their turnout is. Also impressive is his debunking of the argument, presented, among other places, in these pages by Ruy Teixeira, that greater turnout wouldn't help the Democrats and the left generally. The problem with studies propounding this conclusion, Wattenberg demonstrates, is that they overgeneralize from presidential election years, where a big electorate more closely matches the actual opinions of the general population. But it is the low-turnout ones in between where non-voting distorts ideology the most. In 1994, 30 percent of people without high school diplomas voted compared to 62 percent with college degrees; "If turnout rates had been equal among all education categories," Wattenberg concludes, "the Republican share of the vote would have fallen from 52.0 percent to 49.2 percent"—for "registered nonvoters in 1994 were consistently more pro-Democratic than were voters on a variety of measures of partisanship." It's an argument with a bonus: armed with it, you get to credit not Dick Morris for Clinton's 1996 reelection but simply a routine increase in turnout from 1994.

But Wattenberg also proposes a master culprit for the steady decline in turnout since 1960, and it's an unsatisfying one: the complexity of the American ballot. In most industrialized countries—save Switzerland, whose ballot complexity, and low voter turnout, mirrors our own—voting is as simple as choosing between two slates every two years. "The information costs that Americans typically encounter as they decide whether or not to vote are often overwhelming," he says. Couldn't those "information costs" be cut appreciably if all citizens were able to cast their ballot by mail, allowing them the opportunity to carry out as much or as little research about the different races as they care to? But Wattenberg rejects the universal mail ballot. Numbers in Oregon, the one state where the mail ballot has been tried, were indeed unimpressive for the first attempt, in 2000. But Oregon's turnout exploded in 2002—too late for inclusion in his book.

It betrays a bit of bias, this hasty conclusion, as if blaming complexity is something Wattenberg is a little too eager to do. He re-

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jects same-day registration as a panacea as well, dismissing Jesse Ventura's Minnesota gubernatorial victory as an outlier—the unfortunate prerogative of the quantifier with data that can't be crammed into a pet thesis. He scorns the effects of the motor voter statute because it has increased voting only incrementally. But isn't an incremental increase better than none at all? Wattenberg stacks the deck toward pessimism. Perhaps there is something to the notion that ballot decisions could be made less complex. But wouldn't the tradeoff for that be less democracy—fewer choices about how we are governed?

WHY THIS ODD fixation on ballot complexity? The answer, it seems to me, has something to do with the same images of a crystalline nineteenth-century "popular democracy" that motivate Crenson and Ginsberg—in this case updated for the 1960s. Wattenberg is much enamored of his finding that the states where turnout has declined most dramatically since 1960 are the ones that once had the strongest political machines. They "formerly facilitated the turnout of people with marginal political interests and/or commitments," Wattenberg observes. They "once provided the key glue that held the process together—getting people to the polls and simplifying a complex set of ballot decisions." But his prime example will catch you up short. In West Virginia, turnout went from 78 percent in 1960 to 45 percent in 1996. West Virginia once had some of the nation's mightiest political machines. They collapsed in the sixties. If the machines had stayed, people would still be voting in West Virginia.

Wattenberg, along with Crenson and Ginsberg, reductively interprets the decline in mass electoral mobilization, and the rise of more "personal democracy" in its place, as an unmitigated bad thing. It can also be seen, on balance, as a good thing. Look again at Wattenberg's case study of West Virginia. One way the machines there held sway was through dastardly corruption—rarely more glaringly than in 1960, when Joseph Kennedy slathered West Virginia Democrats with cash to ensure a presidential primary victory for his son. Here was a place where the organization certainly got people to the polls and simplified a complex set of ballot decisions. West Virginia could hardly be called a place that well served the needs of its most powerless citizens. Upsizing turnout was a way of downsizing democracy—concentrating power in the hands of those best able to "get out the vote." That unmotivated subalterns do not vote at all today is still a disaster, because those who do not vote are precisely the ones for whom our system does not deliver. But that political scientists seem to pine for an era in which subalterns were herded to the polls by bosses (a word that appears in neither of these books) is a bit of a disaster, too. Coal miners might be robbed just as well if they voted than if they didn't, couldn't they?

Wattenberg proceeds with the assumption that voter turnout is a simple proxy for the health of democracy. Crenson and Ginsberg likewise assume that any system of administration that relies for its legitimacy on mass citizen mobilization is preferable to one that also relies on the policy entrepreneurship of public-spirited experts. Ask, instead, why your benchmark for healthy democracy is a system in which unmotivated citizens are marched to the polls in exchange for lumps of coal from ward bosses showing them how to vote. Ask, instead, who served the health and welfare benefits of West Virginians better: the descendants of Boss Tweed or the avatars of Ralph Nader? It's a complex question, and the answers aren't mutually exclusive. Its complexity is not served well by these books' sentimental longing for the good old days. ●

RICK PERLSTEIN is the author of *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* and is at work on a book about the Nixon years.

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Misreadings

Editors:

I write on two matters. The first is to apologize to Jeffrey C. Isaac and *Dissent*'s readers. In my response (Winter 2003) to his review of Frances Stoner Saunders's *The Cultural Cold War* (Summer 2002). I unfairly intimated that he had argued for restricting our critical thought. Re-reading his words, I realize that I was wrong.

Second, Ken Brociner, in his letter to the editor (Winter 2003), alternately taxes the *Nation* with being "all over the place" and "frequently strident and dogmatic." Only one of these characterizations can be true.

Norman Birnbaum
Washington, D.C.

Fighting to the End

Editors:

Last October, one of the few remaining socialists of the 1930s, Gordon Haskell, died at the age of eighty-five. Gordon was the son of Congregationalist missionaries in Bulgaria and came here in the middle of the 1930s. He went to high school in southern California, where he became active in the Upton Sinclair EPIC movement. He attended the University of California-Berkeley, became a full-fledged socialist, and soon after a Trotskyist, siding with the Schachtman faction. In 1950, he became editor of its newspaper, *Labor Action*.

Sometime in the middle 1950s, Gordon changed course and joined the Democratic Party in Brooklyn Heights and for the next twenty or so years advanced a progressive platform, was active in the civil rights movement, and helped to found the Democratic Socialists of America and the Association for Union Democracy. He retired to Santa Cruz, California, in the early 1980s, where he joined the local Democrats and stayed active in both local and national causes until his last days.

Throughout his career, he always maintained his socialist convictions and connections with the local labor movement. He was a man of deep compassion, an activist, writer, organizer, humanist, and friend. He touched many lives and will be remembered.

Joe Gladstone
Santa Cruz, Calif.

Elephants and Baseball

Editors:

Jim Sleeper's portrait ("Whose Elephant?," Winter 2003) of the American left and Jewish cosmopolitanism as somehow alien to the idea of patriotism is mistaken.

Sleeper's intriguing model of what it means to be a good American leaves out one "salvific" thing that redeems wayward atheists and dissenters. America's true glory remains accessible to us sinners: not a shining city on a hill, but a diamond with a hill. I worship, and am often humbled, in its green cathedrals. Call me cosmopolitan, Jewish, even leftist. But give me baseball, or give me death.

Jeffrey Scheuer
New York, New York

Jim Sleeper Replies

Not since George Will's last paean to baseball has anyone but Jeff Scheuer proclaimed it the true name of our desire. But aren't the market forces I criticized gobbling up our national pastime? I wouldn't expect Will to protest, but how about the rest of us?

On Spineless Democrats

Editors:

I am in general agreement with Michael Tomasky's argument ("Calling a Truce," Winter 2003) that Democratic liberals and moderates must reconcile for the general good of the party and of the country.

But there is something about it that bothers me. If I understand him correctly, Tomasky reiterates the point that, to regain credibility, the Democrats must stand for something. Well, Democratic liberals may sometimes stand for the wrong principles—his point about their opposition to welfare reform is well taken—but they do stand for principles.

In contrast, it seems to me at least, too many Democratic moderates are unprincipled and simply respond to whatever hot buttons right-wing interest groups and their Republican allies decide to push among voters—typically, I've noticed, among white/rural/southern voters. In 2000, Al Gore lost votes in the Ohio Valley in part, perhaps,

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because voters there were roused by the National Rifle Association's appeal to defend their "right to bear arms." The response of Democratic moderates? Abandon the cause of gun control, which Bill Clinton had so notably championed. The result of their shift has been dramatic: now Jonathan Chait can write, with only mild exaggeration, "they couldn't muster a majority to ban private ownership of tactical nuclear weapons."

I consider myself a realist as well as a liberal, but I'm finding it hard to make common cause with people bouncing all over the political map.

William B. Hixson, Jr.
East Lansing, Michigan

Editors:

Michael Tomasky is missing the point ("Calling a Truce," Winter 2003). The Democrats' basic problem is not disunity or failure to split the difference on particular issues but failure to be a party of opposition, to make a critique of the Republican vision of what American society should be and offer an alternative. It's true that having an alternative vision will not guarantee victory—it's still necessary to persuade the public—but in a contest between vision and nonvision, vision will win every time. Even the idea of compromising on issues, whether within one's own party or with the perceived position of voters, only makes sense if you know *what* you are compromising: that is, if there's some basic framework of ideas and aims you are referring to.

The conservative Democrats share an outlook that is fundamentally similar to the Republicans'; that is, pro-corporate and socially conservative, but without the Republicans' dynamism. The liberal Democrats are still living off the legacy of the thirties and the sixties but have no intellectual framework to make sense of the past thirty years. They have no ideas about how to defend the rights of workers or social welfare in an age where transnational corporations are calling the shots. They don't know how to combat the ideological offensive of the right against the very concept of economic equality and public goods, or how to explain why individual freedom and sexual equality should be defended against "family values." They don't have an alternative conception of national security. And they don't understand that every time they move nervously to the center they are relocating the center somewhere to the right of where it was. Since they don't know how to defend their positions on issues to the public or how to answer the conservatives' arguments, they lose or go to the right (and still lose). But then, this is true of the broad left in general: by and large it has no coherent intellectual framework, just a bunch of moral stances (against greed, for compassion, fairness, diversity, and so on.). The Republicans, in contrast, feed off a larger conservative movement that has ideas and aggressively pushes them. It's no contest.

Ellen Willis
New York, New York

Michael Tomasky Replies

To William Hixson: Your point about running up the white flag on gun control is a good one. But the intellectual question at the center is this: Is the ability to accommodate a range of opinion on an issue perforce a sign of lack of principle? Or is it possible, instead, that it might be a sign of the existence of a broad and robust (if cantankerous) coalition? Here's an example. Last December, I was talking with a Democratic operative about the midterm elections. You just have to understand, he told me, how deeply conservative some parts of this country are. He told me of a congressional district in Tennessee where, according to the party's polling, a majority of Democratic primary voters supported posting the Ten Commandments in the schools. That's Democratic primary voters! So, what is a national party to do in the face of such information? Many liberal Democrats on the coasts, I guess, would say let them go. I don't. I believe that to some extent "principle" has been fetishized, converted into a rationale for defeat. To me, getting 51 percent of vote in an election and keeping dangerous people out of power is a principle, a pretty grand one in fact, and I wish more Democrats and liberals and leftists thought that way.

To Ellen Willis: quite right, the Democrats are supine. But I'm not so sure that vision will "win every time, no matter what it is." Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan had visions, as did George McGovern. Vision wins if it answers the concerns of a majority of voters (and if it is pressed aggressively, which we all agree is a huge Democratic problem). And to do *that*, it seems to me, it has to arise out of something real; that is, an actual social base. The New Deal arose out of a newly vibrant working class, civil rights from a confluence of black moral petition and white empathy. Neither of those bases exists today on a broad scale, nor does anything that can create a massive progressive movement. The reason the Democrats don't know how to defend the rights of the working class is that there isn't a working class anymore, in the old sense; unions have a fraction of their old power, and lots of unionized workers probably back, say, posting the Ten Commandments in the schools. I agree wholeheartedly that Democrats have no "intellectual framework" today, but I suggest that developing one can only come out of a frank recognition of today's social conditions and an effort to find the liberal political potential within them.

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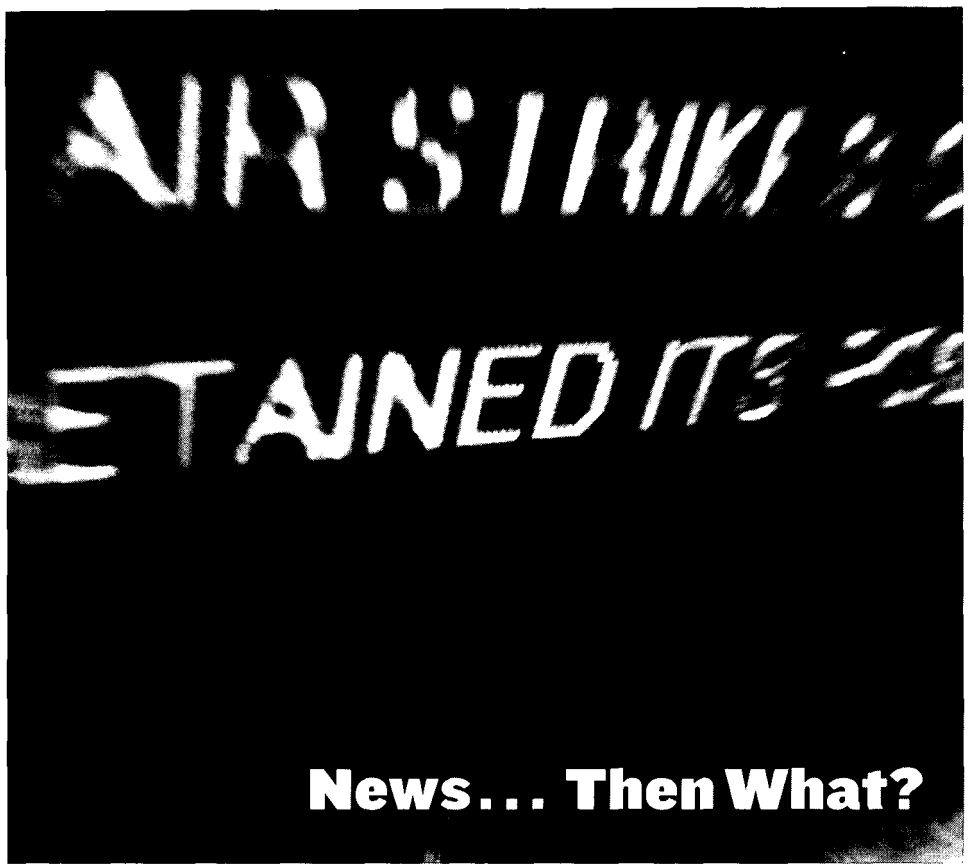

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During the first month of this year, the nation's major newspapers used the phrase "class warfare" in 267 stories, compared with 372 times in all of 2002. One might think the revolution is at hand. The reality, though, has more to do with the routines of American politics and journalism than with capitalists and workers on the barricades.

The official declaration of class warfare in America came on Thursday, January 2, when George W. Bush, seeking to preempt criticisms of his tax cut plan, said, "I understand the politics of economic stimulus—that some would like to turn this into class warfare. That's not how I think."

If Bush was worried that his policy would trigger inflammatory class warfare rhetoric from Democrats, he shouldn't have been. The strongest same-day critique came from David Sirota, a spokesperson for Democrats on the House Appropriations Committee in *USA Today*: "Who's waging class warfare—the president, who insists on giving giant tax breaks to his rich pals . . . or Democrats, who try to stop that kind of irresponsible behavior?"

Most newspapers simply framed the class warfare debate as Republicans versus Democrats, pitting advocates and opponents of Bush's policies in the standard "he said/she said" format. But the debate was pretty one-sided. The key representative of the nation's working families—AFL-CIO president John Sweeney—was almost invisible in the mainstream media. Except for a January 4 story in the *Chicago Sun-Times*—which quoted Sweeney as saying, "The president should shelve the dividend cut and focus instead on a targeted recovery package that will help average American families"—the nation's top labor leader was basically shut out of the class warfare debate in the nation's major papers.

The real debate over Bush's statement took place on editorial and op-ed pages. An unsigned column on January 26 in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* explored the origins of the phrase (even citing the *Communist Manifesto*), and concluded, "Today, class warfare is a phrase that conservatives use to blast liberals, and that liberals, long on the defensive about it, are at last beginning to use to attack conservatives."

Chicago Tribune News Service columnist Matthew Miller raised the class warfare issue by posing the question, "Is the distribution of income produced by the free market presumptively moral?" After reviewing the arguments on both sides, he concluded that it wasn't, then asked his readers, "Which side are you on?"

It was the *New York Times* op-ed page that waged the most effective attack on Bush's economic program, with columnist Paul Krugman quarterbacking a team that included regulars Maureen Dowd, Nicholas Kristoff, and Bob Herbert. These columnists consistently and effectively criticized Bush's economic plans while chastising the Democrats for their limp response. In a January 21 column, Krugman demonstrated the devastating regressivity of Bush's tax cuts, then noted that the beneficiaries "are the usual suspects—the same small, wealthy minority that got the big benefits from the last tax cut. Does pointing this out constitute class warfare?"

The *Times*'s editorial writers were more cautious: "It may not be class warfare, but it's breathtakingly provocative. One week after President Bush proposed billions in tax breaks for fretful stock owners, he revived a plan to wring an additional 10 hours of work each week from women with small children who are managing to hold a job under the federal welfare reform program."

Let's see: For the past year, Bush has ruthlessly used federal policy to widen the economic divide, giving huge tax breaks to the rich, weakening environmental regulations on business, cutting heating assistance to the poor in the dead of winter, and forcing welfare mothers to work extra hours. If this isn't class warfare, what is?

PETER DREIER

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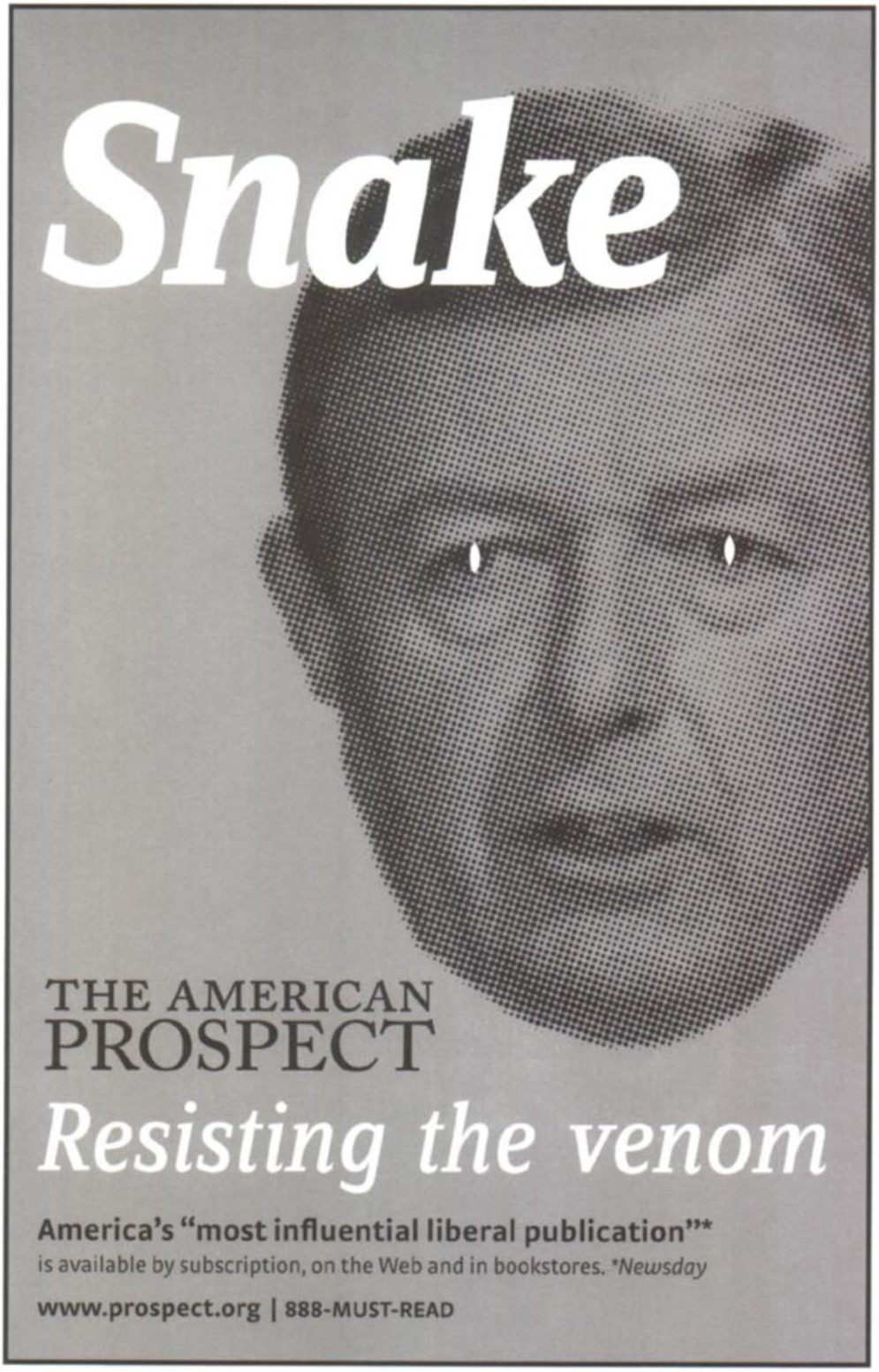

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